Participants' lived experiences of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) – an exploratory study.

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ABSTRACT

A new therapeutic approach is beginning to emerge in addiction clinics across England. Known as Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) the approach uses equines in experiential activities with clients to facilitate psychological change. Despite its increasing popularity in practice, there is a dearth of research addressing the efficacy of the approach. Furthermore, there is no published research about how clients experience EAP. To address this gap in the research literature, the present study investigates the clients' lived experiences of EAP and how these are perceived to facilitate therapeutic change.

Transcripts of semi-structured interviews with eight male participants who had participated in EAP as part of their therapeutic program at an in-patient addiction clinic are analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

The findings suggest that the personal history of each participant (prior to EAP) strongly impacts upon their experience of EAP. Participants gain an increased access to their cognitions and emotions through the way they personally react to the horses' behaviours. Through these dynamics between horse and human, participants begin to make links between their experiences in the EAP arena and their world outside of therapy. Often the horse-human relationships mirror those of the participants' human-human relationships. In addition, participants describe developing relationships with the horses that are perceived to meet emotional needs. All of these aspects of the EAP work contribute towards the participants' overall therapeutic change.

The findings support current practitioners' anecdotal writings about the potential therapeutic effects of EAP. Furthermore, the study has implications for the use of EAP within Counselling Psychology due to its emphasis upon relationships and value of the subjective experience.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A new and innovative therapeutic intervention is beginning to surface across addiction clinics in the United Kingdom. It employs the therapeutic use of equines in experientially based activities with clients. Anecdotal feedback is currently positive and some Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) therapists have their own hypothesis about the reason for the efficacy of the intervention. However, no formal research has been carried out into the understanding of the psychological processes that might take place during EAP and how these may serve to encourage change in the clients. Such an innovative therapeutic intervention has the potential to move therapeutic work forwards and it is therefore worth investigating in detail. To be able to evaluate the value of EAP it is necessary to investigate what psychological processes might be at the root of the EAP experience. With the support of academic research, the therapeutic intervention can be offered an opportunity to be empirically validated or indeed evaluated, not based on skepticism or subjective support, but upon formal research findings.

With such a novel research topic, there are several theoretical routes that can be taken in an attempt to explain, understand and interpret the research findings. This makes the research study complex in that the reader needs to be provided with a comprehensive understanding of the potential links between EAP and psychological theories. The following literature review will therefore cover many different psychological aspects in relation to EAP in order to provide the reader with a full understanding of current EAP practice and research.

To set the scene, the literature review will first present the historical nature of human-animal relationships. This will lead into the concept of using animals in therapeutic settings known as Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). Under the umbrella of AAT, EAP will be introduced referring to its' historical origins and current practitioners' claims of efficacy. Subsequently a review of EAP research will be

presented. This will address the dearth of research and suggest current limitations of the available research. Next EAP will be linked to existing therapeutic and philosophical concepts (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and the humanistic paradigm). These concepts will be used as the main frameworks for interpreting and discussing the research findings.

The next section of the literature review presents EAP and other potentially relevant psychological concepts. These are based on EAP practitioners' experiences and are therefore not currently researched topics that have been explored under the heading of EAP. However, they are presented in the literature review to offer the reader a comprehensive and up to date overview of the current ideas around potential psychological processes at work during EAP. The main categories presented in this section are a) the role of relationships and b) communication styles and , c) experiential learning theory.

Towards the end of the literature review, links will be presented between Counselling Psychology philosophy, the chosen participant sample of clients' with symptoms of addiction and current EAP practice. This will serve to bring together the topics covered in the literature review whilst also providing the reader with a rationale for the study to be carried out under the umbrella of Counselling Psychology. Finally, the purpose of the study will be presented.

1.1 The human-animal connection

Humans and animals have cohabited for thousands of years. Initially used as workers, animals provided humans with protection as well as physical strength for faming and heavy labour. As animals became further integrated into society, they evolved into a more pronounced part of human culture (Levison, 1972). This facilitated a change and expansion in the use of animals from pure practicality to companionship that led to humans finding a secondary benefit in animals. This benefit came in the form of the animals meeting human psychological needs (Budiansky, 1997; Levison, 1997). In the past few decades, research has begun to surface which addresses this very phenomenon. Research findings have identified and supported varied psychological benefits for humans. These include animals being used as social support (Svendsen, 2006), as surrogates for a variety of relationships (Miller, 1984) and as creatures that can enhance self-esteem (Levison, 1978).

When researching the therapeutic value of animals upon humans, Katcher (2000) suggests that it is important to study how people *think* and *talk* about animals. This suggests that a person's perception of his experience of being with an animal is important. Katcher proposes that this would help to understand the nature of the interactions at play between humans and animals. He further notes that this type of research might shed some light upon the mental constructs at play during human-animal interactions. This is an aspect the present research aims to address, and it will be discussed in the 'purpose of study' section of this paper.

Some psychologists have their own hypothesis of why AAT is therapeutic. For example, Owen (2008) offers an insight into possibilities of how the human-animal interaction might be therapeutic. From her clinical work as a Counselling Psychologist, Owen suggests that by watching animals the observer is offered an alternative view of the world. She notes that by looking at an animal, a person might also be diverted from some of the factors that cause stress and worry in the

everyday situations. Thus Owen presents the idea that being with animals encourages a presence in the here-and-now and that this potentially offers the opportunity for people to switch off from daily stresses whilst interacting with their pets. One implication of this idea is that there may be an immediate therapeutic effect and positive impact whilst being with a companion animal.

One of the first published papers on the concept of positive impact of animals upon humans was by H. S. Bossard (1944). He looked at the role of the dog as a member of the family, providing unconditional love and an emotional outlet for human desire to express love and affection. The leap of taking the psychological benefits of companion animals into a professional arena can be credited to Boris Levison. His article 'The dog as a "co-therapist"' (1962) introduces the concept of using an animal, in this case a dog, during psychotherapy sessions with children. In his paper, Levison suggests that the presence of an animal could hasten the therapeutic alliance and increase motivation in clients. Levison labels this type of work 'pet therapy' but today it is more widely accepted as 'Animal Assisted Therapy' (AAT).

1.2 Animal Assisted Therapy.

AAT has become an umbrella term for professionally trained clinicians utilising the innate qualities of a variety of animals in combination with the human-animal bond to facilitate therapeutic processes (Chandler, 2005). AAT can be defined as a goal-directed intervention in which an animal becomes an integral part of the treatment process and it is believed to encourage improvement in cognitive, social, and emotional functioning (Fine, 2000).

During the last two decades, increased research in the area of AAT has produced some positive results into the benefits of animals both on a psychosocial and psycho-physiological level. A groundbreaking study in 1980 found that cardiac

patients who owned pets showed faster recovery rates and increased longevity (Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch & Thomas). Goodman and Redefer (1989) found that children with developmental disorders increased their socially appropriate behaviour after AAT interactions. Behavioural problems also decreased in some children with developmental and emotional problems after AAT work (Kogan, Granger, Fitchett, Helmer & Young, 1999).

In relation to depression and anxiety, several studies have shown improvement after the use of AAT. For example, Barker and Dawson (1998) found that when comparing levels of anxiety in two groups of hospitalised psychiatric patients with psychotic disorders, the group that had received AAT presented with lower anxiety ratings compared to the non-AAT group.

When using AAT for depression, Aycock, Folse, Minder and Santana (1994) found a reduction in depressive symptoms measured on the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). Aycock et al. looked at three groups of participants. One experienced AAT with directive group psychotherapy (group 1), one had non-directive AAT with no psychotherapy (group 2), and finally there was a control group (group 3). The results showed a significant difference between group 2 and group 3. It was thought that the results suggest a lift in mood in the non-directive AAT group. This is believed to have happened through the participant interaction with the AAT process. However, the addition of psychotherapy (group 1) focused on painful experiences and thus mediated the results of the combined therapy group. These results suggest that AAT overall might be useful as an 'immediate positive impact' therapeutic approach which has the ability to quickly decrease low mood in clients. The results do not suggest more long-term therapeutic benefits. These findings reflect Katcher's (2000) comments in relation to the value of animals' immediate effect but limited knowledge about long-term value of AAT. He suggests that "there are very few sustained therapeutic effects from contact with animals that can be demonstrated when the animals are not present" (p.462).

From a therapeutic point of view, this leaves the question of how valuable AAT really can be if it provides an in-the-moment benefit but with limited long-term

effect. It also raises the question, are there not other types of therapeutic interventions that might provide the same type of short-term benefit?

However, there is a more specifically defined form of therapeutic intervention that falls under the umbrella term of AAT. It uses a specific species of animal (equines) and according to its practitioners; it does not simply work on a short-term mood-lifting basis but has a very powerful impact upon the therapeutic processes of change. This therapeutic intervention is Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP).

1.3 Equine Assisted Psychotherapy – what is it?

The therapeutic use of horses has a long history but originally the main purpose of using horses therapeutically was helping clients challenged in the physical realm (Klontz, Leinart, & Zugich, 2002). The more recent approach of horses having a psychotherapeutic value is an evolutionary development following the experiential therapy movement away from traditional 'talk' therapy of the '70's (Klontz et al., 2002). In the early '90's the Sierra Tucson Treatment Centre in Tucson Arizona became one of the first known addiction programmes to include horses in their therapeutic approach to treating addiction. The use of equines for this purpose has gone from strength to strength since then and in 1999, Lynn Thomas and Greg Kersten founded The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), which is today one of the main supporters and educators in the field of EAP (Jarrell, 2005)

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is an adjunct experiential therapeutic intervention that uses equines as active ingredients in the therapeutic process. It is adjunct in the way that it is not a stand-alone therapeutic approach. EAP is designed to be used in combination with one-to-one therapy and/or therapy groups. For example, the present study's participants are inpatients in an addiction

clinic where they attend daily group sessions and one-to-one therapy. These sessions are based on the 12 Step programme (see methodology section for further details of participant group) and the programme incorporates EAP as an adjunct therapeutic approach several times throughout the three-week inpatient stay at the clinic.

During EAP, clients are engaged in activities that involve working with the horses. EAP work does not involve riding and all work is carried out from the ground. Often the activities involve goals of moving one or more horses in a certain direction, over an obstacle or between certain markers. For example, one EAP activity called 'life's obstacles' (Lancia, 2008) asks the client(s) to build an obstacle made from a selection of objects already placed randomly in the horse pen (e.g. jumping poles, large boxes, traffic cones). Once the obstacle is built, the clients are asked to label the obstacle as a meaningful personal metaphor for something that causes them distress (substance abuse, relationship difficulties, etc). Once the symbolic meaning of the obstacle has been identified, the task is to try to move the horse(s) over or through the obstacle without touching or bribing the horse (see also appendix E). No further instructions are given to the clients.

The EAP activity entails a number of participants: the therapist, the equine specialist, the client, and the horse(s). The equine specialist is responsible for the safety of all people involved as well as the horse. The equine specialist also has the role of helping the client to understand what a horse's reaction to the client's actions might be reflecting. For example, if the client is quick or loud in his behavior towards the horse and the horse moves away, this might reflect a simple message such as dislike on the horse's part of the participant's behaviour. The feedback provided by the horse and the subsequent cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions by the client, are used as valuable information, which can be used to reflect and process the client's in-vivo experiences.

The therapist's role is to focus on the client and work directly with his psychological processes during and immediately after each EAP activity. This is working on a therapeutic level with the client very much as the therapist would do in a more

traditional one–to-one setting. For example, the therapist might help the client to make links between therapeutic processes and the outside world. The therapist might also work directly with emotions in the moment, discuss in-vivo cognitions and behaviours and in addition explore alternatives to the client's typical reactions.

One of the key experiences of EAP is the processing of the activities (Mandrell, 2006). Mandrell suggest that an underlying assumption is that insight on its own does not provide change in clients. Rather, change is achieved by translating insight into action through the active experiencing of the new situations that EAP provides (Clapp & Rudolph, 1993). Therefore, without the processing experience, the effects of EAP are likely to only be short term. The processing offers the client the opportunity to generalize his experiences to his outside world and transfer his learning to future situations (Nadler, 1993).

EAP practitioners have proposed a number of reasons why horses might be of therapeutic value to clients. Mandrell (2006) believes that it is difficult to explain specifically what it is the horses bring to therapy (compared to other animals). However, notes that the horse's large powerful stature can be initially intimidating but also an empowering metaphor for a client who struggles "with a life issue that seems bigger than they are" (p. 23). By achieving a task with an animal of such size, clients experience increased confidence and this work offers metaphors of other anxiety-provoking or intimidating situations in a client's life. Mandrell also offers the idea that the unconditional love that horses provide along with their sensitivity to non-verbal language present the client with learning opportunities via immediate and honest feedback.

According to the founders of EAP, it is an intervention that addresses a broad range of mental health difficulties. These include addiction, behavioural issues, attention deficit disorder, substance abuse, eating disorders, abuse issues, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal relationship difficulties. EAGALA propose that the therapy is aimed at enhancing self-awareness, correcting maladaptive behaviours, improving difficult feelings and attitudes, exploring the client's human-to-human relationships, and reducing feelings of depression. In addition, Tyler (1994) suggests

that the EAP approach is appropriate for any age or gender, whether physically able or disabled. These are broad statements that seem to address a large variety of emotional difficulties, encompass a wide range of learning outcomes and present a therapeutic intervention appropriate for all client demographics.

From a research point of view, this is rather unhelpful as generalizations of this nature run the risk of weakening the validity of a therapeutic intervention. That is, at this stage, there is not enough research to support such claims and therefore even if the current practical use of EAP is as broad as is suggested, without empirical research to test and verify its efficacy, it merely becomes an unfounded statement from the practitioners of EAP. This is particularly true for EAP as the volume of research is currently extremely limited. Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, specificity is required to focus the research on one of these mental health areas with a homogeneous client group. This will facilitate a new level of depth of understanding in the area of EAP that has not previously been published.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.i Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) research

As previously stated, empirical research in the field of EAP is currently sparse and has only begun to make headway in the last two decades. Societies such as EAGALA have been established to encourage empirical research and facilitate the transfer from anecdotal evidence and a select group of practitioners, to an evidence based practice, which hopes to encourage more widespread acceptance of EAP as a useful adjunct therapeutic approach.

Despite the paucity of research on EAP, there is some research on its use with specific populations. For example, research has been conducted into the use of EAP

with youths. In 2002, Mann and Williams looked at group of youths taking part in EAP. They found a clinically significant improvement in 82% of participants taking part in Equine Assisted Family Therapy, a variant of EAP in which the intervention is undertaken with a family as a whole. On average, 5 sessions produced an improvement in areas of conduct, mood, and psychotic disorders. These results were particularly interesting, as the participants had previously been exposed to more conventional therapeutic approaches such as group therapy and one to one psychotherapy, these had elicited limited positive improvement. Young offenders have also shown behavioural improvement after EAP sessions. According to the Geauga County Juvenile Court in Ohio, juvenile offenders showed reduced recidivism (from 67% to 79% not recidivating within 3 months of treatment termination) after the incorporation of EAP in their therapeutic rehabilitation programmes (Thomas, 2002).

Research with EAP has also looked at its efficacy with 'at-risk' children and adolescents. Trotter (2006) looked at the effectiveness of EAP group counselling and curriculum school-based group guidance in reducing children's and adolescents' negative behaviours, while also increasing positive behaviours. Two types of behaviour instrument were used: the Behaviour Assessment System for Children (BASC) and the Animal Assisted Therapy- Psychosocial Session Form (AA-PSF). Results showed that the BASC Parent-Report revealed improvement in twelve behaviour areas in the EAP group. The comparison group showed a statistically significant improvement in only one behaviour area. The AA-PSF showed a significant improvement in all of its 3-scale scores (overall behaviour, increased positive behaviours, decreased negative behaviours). This study therefore supports the hypothesis that EAP is an evidence–based effective mental health treatment. It also suggests that EAP is a more effective treatment modality than curriculum school-based group guidance. The support found in this study for the efficacy of EAP helps to justify further research into the practice of EAP.

Further research into the use of EAP with children was carried out by Remick-Barlow, Robbins and Schultz (2007). Over a period of 18 months, children in the age

range of 4-16 had experience of EAP. In all 63 children were included in the study. Their psychological symptoms were varied ranging from mood disturbance, adjustment disorder, disruptive disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and post traumatic stress disorder. The number of EAP sessions each child had also varied greatly from one to 116. The children's progress in relation to EAP was measured using the Children's Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) score, used prior to EAP treatment and at three month intervals until the end of treatment. The findings were as follows: there was a significant improvement in GAF scores in participants with a variety of psychological diagnoses after receiving EAP. Remick-Barlow et al. (2007) also suggest that the psychological changes noted were rapid; however, they recognize that from the results in their study it is not clear how age, gender, and environment affect the results. Finally, they suggest that further research is needed to quantify the effects of EAP.

The Remick-Barlow et al. (2007) study showed positive outcomes for the use of EAP with children. However, there are several difficulties with the study which highlight requirements for further research. The wide age group and broad diagnostic criteria make it difficult for the reader to use the findings to inform potential use of EAP in clinical work. As in other EAP studies, specificity is lacking and this emphasizes the need for future research to focus on specific client groups in order to facilitate in-depth research that can address the value of EAP in relation to specific psychological difficulties. On a more long-term basis research might be of valuable across psychological symptoms. However, at such an early stage in the development of a therapeutic approach it is necessary to explore the perceived effect of EAP with particular client groups. By carrying out such research the findings give an opportunity to offer in-depth understanding of the approach rather than broad and general findings about its efficacy.

Some research has been done with just such a focus on a specific client group, such as a study focused upon couples. (Russell-Martin, 2006). The study compares EAP couple therapy to Solution-Focussed Couples Therapy using a dyadic adjustment scale (Spanier, 1967). The results found that on the third administration of the

measurement tool there was a significant difference between the two groups. The EAP participants showed an average of seven points higher on the adjustment scale as compared to participants in the solution-focused group. These results suggest an increased rate of psychological change for EAP clients compared to the solution-focused group. The underlying psychological processes that took place to facilitate the measured changes cannot be identified with this type of study. However, the findings suggest a potential value in using EAP with couples in distress.

One study that has looked at factors relating to psychological change processes is by Anderson (2005). When addressing psychological change it is important to be aware of variables that may influence or impact upon the therapeutic approach. Anderson researched 300 participants' perceived efficacy level of EAP by comparing subject variables with perceived efficacy measures. Overall, it was found that, traditionally perceived subject variables such as gender, animal ownership, and urban/rural upbringing do not affect the perceived efficacy of EAP work. This suggests that EAP can be applied to a wider population of clients and not simply for clients with a rural upbringing. Anderson proposes future research into the development of knowledge about which specific client populations EAP could best serve.

A more recent research paper published further quantitative findings in support of the efficacy of EAP. Bivens, Klontz, Klontz, and Leinart (2007) measured participant scores prior, during and six months post EAP treatment. The measures used were the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI, Derogatis, 1993), used to measure clinical distress and the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI, Shostrom, 1974) used to measure constructs related to self-actualization. According to Bivens et al. (2007) the findings suggested that participants showed significant and stable reduction in clinical distress. Participants also reported reduced quantity of psychological symptoms.

These findings are supportive of the efficacy of EAP as a clinical tool however; there are difficulties with the published paper that potentially reduce the significance of the findings. The participant group was not described to the reader so the use of

EAP was not specified to a particular client group. This is problematic due to the lack of applicability of the research findings to both future research and clinical practice. In addition, there was a lack of common standardization of EAP. The researchers utilised another descriptive name for EAP. Rather than using the term EAP, the therapeutic approach was labeled 'Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy' (EAET). Presumably, this term derived from the researchers' choice of theoretical framework from which they practiced EAP - 'Experiential therapy' (Mahrer, 1983). This labeling is unhelpful in the attempt to develop a strong and valid body of EAP research as it leaves the reader with an uncertainty about what EAP really entails and how it could be applied to specific client groups. It is possible that Bivens et al. (2007) simply called their EAP practice EAET and in fact, the two practices are the same. However, without explicitly stating the type of therapeutic approach the reader is left unsure as to what is meant by EAET. In addition, if the research is supportive of EAET it leaves the question: are the findings directly relevant to EAP? If so, how transferable are the findings?

Due to the above issues, the Bivens et al. (2007) paper helps to highlight the importance of researching EAP in a manner that is explicitly transparent about its understanding of EAP and provides a strong theoretical basis from which to understand and explain EAP concepts. The present study aims to follow this approach of transparency by firstly offering a detailed description of the researcher's understanding of EAP. Secondly, the study will be using the theoretical construct of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a framework for interpreting the participants' lived experiences of EAP. These two considerations will help to present the study as a valid piece of empirical research.

However, before moving on to presenting the therapeutic approaches currently used in conjunction with EAP, there is one piece of research that potentially serves to increase our understanding of the horse-human bond and it is therefore relevant to EAP literature. This research looks at the physiological rather than psychological links between humans and horses.

1.4.ii A physiological link?

The powerful processes experienced by some clients during EAP session may link to physiological research carried out by Dr Ellen Gehrke (2006). Gehrke carried out a pilot study looking at horses' responses to emotional changes in a person. She measured the heart rate and patterns of the participant and the horse simultaneously and found the horse's heart measurements to respond to changes in the human heart rate patterns during times of emotional change. In her research Gehrke recognized that it is early days in this field of research however suggests that "...horses are sensitive to changes in human emotions." (p.4). This research although at its infant stage of exploration suggests that there is a potential physiological link between horses and humans and this may help to explain the positive processes reported by clients and practitioners about the effect of EAP sessions.

Gehrke's research may therefore relate to the connection to the horses that clients have reported to feel during EAP (Connett, 2008). The idea of working with the horse and experiencing a positive alliance with the horse relates to a basic assumption of the humanistic paradigm relating to the therapeutic alliance – that of, empathic, active and sensitive engagement in the world of the client (Bohart and Greenberg, 1997). Wampold (2001) suggests that the portion of variance, due to the alliance between client and therapist, contributes 3-4 times as much to the outcome effect size as the specific treatment adopted. This supports the hypothesis that the therapeutic alliance between client and therapist is vital for change. Perhaps EAP works well as it gives prominence to the building of the relationships both with therapist and with horse, with one mirroring the other (Frewin and Gardiner, 2005).

The above introduction of the therapeutic alliance within EAP work leads on to the question of which therapeutic approach is most appropriate for EAP. The following section will address this question and provide a rationale for the chosen theoretical

framework from which the findings of the present study will be interpreted and discussed.

1.5 Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and existing therapeutic concepts

Current literature on EAP suggests the method to be 'metatheoretical' (Karol, 2007; Mandrell, 2006). That is, it suggests that each professional using EAP as an adjunct therapeutic approach can apply his or her own theoretical orientation to the processing of a clients EAP work. Whilst, at a first glance this might seem attractive to a newcomer to EAP, by offering a flexibility and diverse appeal to a wide audience of clinicians, it also leaves EAP open to criticism. It could be argued that EAP is trying to present itself as a 'one size fits all' type of therapeutic approach. This undermines the potential value of EAP by presenting an adjunct therapeutic approach that lacks theoretical depth. Despite Karol's (2007) description of EAP as 'meta-theoretical', she also provides insight into the lack of current theoretical depth. Karol states that there are very few masters or doctoral level educated professionals currently working with EAP. She suggests that therefore the depth of current knowledge of therapeutic approaches is not being applied to the practice of EAP. This leads to reduced usage of an approach that has the potential to offer more than purely increased self-esteem through the experience of handling a horse. In fact, Karol (2007) suggests that EAP has the potential to act as a catalyst to deeper therapeutic work between client and professional. She states that this is possible with EAP when the professional's therapeutic approach is strongly underpinned by theory. In light of this, it therefore seems vital for the current paper to address this current void by offering theoretical depth to the understanding of participants' lived experiences of EAP. The discussion section of the present paper will offer this to the reader.

Mandrell (2006) and Taylor (2001) both suggest the use of Cognitive Behavioural therapy as an appropriate therapeutic orientation to be used by EAP practitioners. Both authors also mention possible alternative approaches that can be employed such as Reality Therapy, Gestalt therapy, Brief therapy, Systems theory (Mandrell, 2006) and Analytic Psychotherapy (Taylor, 2001). As noted, this mix of theories reduces the theoretical depth of EAP and therefore for the purpose of the present study this needs to be narrowed down and therefore facilitate a more in depth use of a single therapeutic approach.

The author of the present study places herself within the theoretical framework of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. And as a Counselling Psychologist, underlying this framework are the philosophical assumptions of the humanistic paradigm (discussed later in the paper). One of the discrete approaches that exist within the humanistic paradigm is experiential psychotherapy (McLeod, 2003). This approach is of particular significance to EAP due to its experiential nature.

Therefore, for the purpose of the present study, the theoretical underpinning will lie with the humanistic experiential learning aspect of EAP whilst using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy theory to facilitate an interpretation of the participants' experiences of EAP and explore the present study's findings in detail.

To facilitate the use the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach in conjunction with the humanistic paradigm as frameworks from which to interpret and explore the findings of the present study; both concepts will now be presented in more detail in the subsequent two sections.

1.5.i Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has its roots in the early writings of Aaron Beck (Beck, 1963; Beck, 1964; Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976). Beck proposes that emotional difficulties are based on the idea of a person's perception of an event influencing their emotional, physiological, and behavioural reactions. Thus, it is the individual way in which a person experiences an event that can serve to trigger and maintain emotional difficulties.

Judith Beck suggests that the foundations of how a person might perceive a certain event are linked to underlying core belief that are developed at an early age as a child interacts with significant others and experience a variety of situations (1995). A person can develop both positive and negative core beliefs. A negative belief can for example be, 'I am inadequate', 'the world is a dangerous place' or 'other people cannot be trusted'. These beliefs can lie dormant for years. This dormant state, it is suggested, is maintained by the cognitive strategies put in place by the individual to suppress the salience of the core beliefs. This suppressing of painful beliefs facilitates an ability to function on a daily basis without the deeper core beliefs being 'active' and easily accessible and potentially leading to high levels of distress. These cognitive strategies can be in the form of if-then statements such as 'if I do everything perfectly then people will not notice that I am inadequate', or 'if I stay in control at all times then I will not be hurt by other people'. Although clients are often not aware of these conditional assumptions, they may show themselves more prominently via compensatory strategies such as a person's high standards at work (to reach perfection) or an avoidance of seeking help from others (to stay in control and avoid showing weaknesses).

Beck (1976)suggests that emotional difficulties arise when a person's conditional assumptions are broken or challenged by the perception of the external event. For example, following the loss of a job an individual may begin to develop automatic thoughts about 'not being the perfect employee' and thus, his compensatory

strategy of being perfect to disguise a core belief of inadequacy, is no longer functional and his core belief is activated.

When a core belief is activated, the client will easily attend to information that supports the belief however, is likely to struggle to find contradictory evidence (Beck, 1995). This is where the process of perception and evaluation of events is relevant. As previously noted, in CBT it is the client's perception of the event that is likely to influence the affective, behavioural, and physiological reactions. When a core belief is triggered the client will subconsciously try to make sense of the world and by doing so will look for evidence to match the internal rigid core beliefs. This serves to maintain the activation of the core belief and thus the emotional distress remains.

The therapist's role, within the cognitive behaviroural framework, is to work collaboratively with the client to identify unhelpful perceptions and resulting emotions, behaviours and physiological reactions. The detailed identification of the client's difficulties and their context is the key to developing a collaborative formulation that helps to explain the predisposing, precipitating, and maintaining factors in the client's distress. The client and therapist can explore ways that these processes of distress might be adapted. For example, with the use of Socratic questioning (Padesky, 1993) the client's attention can be drawn to important information that is outside of the client's focus and this may lead to alternative ways of addressing his cognitions. In addition, behavioural experiments are used to test the client's cognitions and possibly offer new alternative cognitions following a review of the behavioural experiment outcome. Physiological regulation (particularly relevant for anxiety) is achieved through relaxation exercise skills.

CBT has been criticized as being a therapeutic approach that does not incorporate the value of client emotions and the importance of the therapeutic relationship. However, Emery, Beck, Rush and Shaw (1979) suggested that the humanistic (Rogers, 1957) core conditions of therapy, such as, empathy, understanding, respect, genuineness, congruence and unconditional positive regard are necessary

but not sufficient to produce therapeutic change. Thus stating that without the core therapeutic skills it is not possible to provide successful cognitive therapy.

In addition, Beck noted the value of collaborative empiricism as a mechanism of addressing the client's difficulties as a team (client and therapist) rather than the therapist being perceived as attacking of the client and his difficulties as a whole. This requires two processes within therapy to be active: a feeling of the relationship growing on a reciprocal basis and the avoidance of the therapist having hidden agendas for the therapeutic work (Beck & Young, 1985). Becks earlier writings therefore help to support the idea that CBT does require a strong therapeutic alliance in order to facilitate change. In addition, Wills and Sanders (2004) note the value of the processes at play in the therapeutic relationship. They suggest that at times of struggle within the relationship rather than 'getting over' the difficulties and then getting back to therapy, it is useful to explore the relational processes being played out in the therapeutic setting as they are often a reflection of a clients relational patterns outside of therapy. Persons (1989) supports this notion by placing value on directly working on the therapeutic relationship as a way of addressing the clients psychological difficulties that often serve to maintain the client's distress. The EAP approach emphasizes the value of processing the experience. The relationship between the client and the therapist is of value, but perhaps EAP places a stronger focus on how the client perceives his relationship with the horse (Mandrell, 2006). Therefore, just like the cognitive behavioural therapy stance, for EAP the in-vivo processes and therapeutic alliances are vital for EAP to reach its potential therapeutic value.

More recently, Young (1990, 1999) has developed a therapeutic approach that he describes to be an expansion to CBT. The motivation to develop this approach labeled 'Schema therapy' was in response to the clients that did not appear to benefit from the more Beckian approach. Schema Therapy was mainly developed for 'long-term characterological' difficulties and has a strong focus upon childhood experiences, emotive techniques and clients' maladaptive coping styles (Klosko, Weishaar, & Young, 2003). Klosko et al. suggest that the therapeutic relationship is

of importance to the facilitation of schema therapy and resulting therapeutic changes. They see the establishing of rapport between client and therapist as the process by which the client can form an emotional bond with the therapist. Klosko et al. use the idea of 'limited re-parenting' to facilitate the client's experience (within the therapeutic setting) of what he emotionally needed as a child but did not get from his parents.

Klosko et al. (2003) also emphasize the importance of appropriate boundaries within the relationship, in order to facilitate the re-parenting process. To maintain these boundaries the therapists' awareness of their own schemas are vital to avoid the emotional needs of the therapist clouding the psychological needs of the client. Schema Therapy and its emphasis upon the therapeutic relationship is a step forwards, away from the initial criticisms of CBT as not inclusive of emotions and therapeutic alliances.

The inclusion of schema therapy within this explanation of CBT theory may seem like attempting to provider a broader theoretical scope than is necessary for the present study. However, the inclusion is valid due to its potential link to EAP. In this chapter potential hypothesis of EAP efficacy (provided by current EAP practitioners) will be presented and within this section, the role of relationships will be revisited. In order to remain true to the previously stated aim of grounding the interpretation of the research findings within the CBT framework, it is necessary to provide the reader with relevant theoretical grounding and hence the inclusion of Schema therapy and its emphasis upon the therapeutic relationship.

This emphasis upon the need for an awareness and active use of the therapeutic alliance, links CBT theory and practice to some of the humanistic values at the root of Counselling Psychology. These values emphasise for example, the "subjective world of the client as meaningful and valid" and "the emphatic engagement of the psychologist with the world of the client" (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2003, p.8). In addition, the humanistic paradigm makes sense of the human experience by using in-vivo processes, reflexivity, the therapeutic use of self as a therapist and the valuing of the client's experience (McLeod, 2003). As noted above Klosko et al.

(2003) place great emphasis on the experience between therapist and client and this presents a link between CBT and the humanistic paradigm that underpins Counselling Psychology philosophy.

1.5.ii The humanistic paradigm

As previously mentioned, the Humanistic paradigm plays an important role in Counselling Psychology practice. Based on the writings of two major figures, Carl Rogers (founder of client-centered therapy) and Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt therapy), it offers a conceptualization of the person as a seeker of optimal functioning rather than as a being a victim of pathology (McLeod, 2003). Maddi (1989) summarised this idea as the 'fulfillment model'. The most important concept in this model is client growth. This growth can be understood by the idea that in the humanistic paradigm, a person is seen as always striving to create, achieve or 'become' and these desires are seen as a fundamental human motive. This approach to human nature is in strong contrast to the conflict model implicit in other therapeutic approaches, for example the psychodynamic view. Rather, from the humanistic view, the person is seen as someone who is innately motivated to progress through life with a desire for change and progression.

Within the broad idea of Maddi's (1989) fulfillment concept, the approach of the psychologist with a humanistic view of human nature is to make sense of individual's world via concepts such as reflexivity, experience, process and the self. Experience is an important concept as the humanistic approach is anti-reductionist in nature (McLeod, 2003). That is, the person is not reduced to emotions or cognitions rather life is understood and contextualized via a person's experience and perception of it, intermingled with related cognitions and emotions (Bohart, 1993) .

Therefore, in relation to the present study, the humanistic paradigm is a useful concept to link to EAP. The value placed on the experiential aspect of therapy is useful on two levels. Firstly, the there is the obvious level of EAP being an experiential therapeutic approach. The setting is outdoors (not a therapy room) and the approach automatically causes the client to 'experience'. Secondly, the humanistic approach sees the process of therapy in itself as an experiential concept that can serve to help the client to work towards fulfillment.

The humanistic approach values processes within therapy and this is one of the important focuses of EAP. The therapist works in-vivo with the client during his EAP experience and immediately after the active aspect of the work, time is set aside to process the experience. EAP practitioners suggest that this offers space for the client to process his individual experience of EAP by reflecting upon his experience with the help of the therapist (Mandrell, 2006).

As can be seen from the above, the humanistic values of reflexivity, experience, process and the self are clearly linked to EAP practice. The Cognitive Behavioural paradigm is linked to EAP via its focus of perceived experiences and their related cognitions, emotions and behaviours. In addition, the more recent importance placed upon in-vivo processes in CBT offer a further link to EAP and its' emphasis upon the value of attending to in-the-moment processes between horse, client, and therapist.

Therefore, due to its links to EAP practice, the combination of the humanistic values with the cognitive behavioural framework will be used to facilitate the author's understanding and interpretation of the present research findings.

The use of theoretical concepts such as CBT and the humanistic paradigm have set the scene for the reader to understand the main theoretical stance taken by the researcher. There are however additional psychological concepts that are used by current EAP practitioners to explain their hypothesis about the efficacy of EAP. These ideas need addressing in order to provide the reader with a comprehensive presentation of all the psychological concepts currently used by practitioners to

facilitate the understanding of EAP's efficacy. In the following section, these additional ideas will be presented and subsequently linked to more general psychological concepts of relevance.

1.6 EAP and other psychological concepts

1.6.i Practitioner hypotheses of efficacy

Some of the current EAP practitioners have proposed their own hypothesis about how EAP might work. Some use a psychodynamic framework, for example, Lavender (2006) suggests that because the horse is devoid of counter-transference behaviour and possess the innate ability to mirror to people their boundary and relationship issues, they are particularly effective in working in-vivo with clients to develop immediate insight into their behaviours and cognitions.

Perin (1981) uses Winnicott's (1965) idea of transitional objects to describe one of the processes of EAP. Katcher (2000) sees the horse as an excellent transitional object because it is alive and shows intentional behaviour, which is more like a person than a toy. The horse as a transitional object can provide affection and seek out the child (the client) but perhaps most importantly the horse cannot contradict the projections placed in them by the client.

Bivens et al. (2007) also suggests that work with horses provides opportunities for projections and transference processes. They note that common horse behaviors of such as ignoring, being distracted by other horses, walking away and neighing are all reaction to which clients respond. These responses are often in the form of a metaphor. A client's personal experience and interpretation of a horse's movements, behaviours, and responses help to determine the meaning of the said

metaphor. The horses serve as a catalyst to the development of metaphors through this process facilitate the surfacing of the clients clinical issues.

Bivens et al. (2007) also link EAP practice to CBT. By reacting in the here-and-now to the horses' behavior, the client also has access to his or her typical cognitions, emotions, and behaviours in relation to how he or she experiences the horse. These typical reactions often reflect the client's reactions outside of therapy. Thus Bivens et al. propose that the client's awareness is raised and the therapeutic intervention offers an opportunity to practice congruence between feelings and behaviours.

Karol (2007) suggests that during EAP work, the client's inner world is expressed through the way he or she interacts with the horse. This offers an opportunity for the therapist to explore these reactions and experiences with the client during and post working with the horse. Karol offers six different aspects of the EAP intervention that she considers 'conducive to psychotherapeutic work'. These are:

1. The existential or actual experience
2. The unique experience of being in a relationship with the horse
3. The experience of the therapeutic relationship with the clinician
4. Non verbal experiences in relation to communication with the horse
5. Preverbal/primitive experience (e.g., comfort and touch)
6. The therapeutic use of metaphor.

These proposed aspects of EAP, offer an opportunity to relate EAP work to other psychological concepts and theories. Due to the lack of current available research in the area, this application of alternative theories may facilitate further understanding of present research findings. For this purpose, Karol's (2007) concepts have been grouped together into psychologically relevant domains.

Firstly, Karol's (2007) emphasis on the experiential aspect of EAP can be linked to the concept of experiential therapy. This has already partly been addressed under

the humanistic paradigm section of this introduction. In relation to this concept, Kolb's (1984) Theory of experiential learning (and development) can be used to facilitate an understanding of how experiencing may facilite learning and therapeutic development in clients. This will be addressed shortly.

Secondly, point 2 and 3 can be linked with psychological theories of relationship building and these will be discussed shortly using writings by Duck (1999) and Hinde (1981) amongst others. Thirdly, point 4, 5, and 6 relate to both non-verbal and verbal types of communication. This proposed aspect of EAP will be linked to psychological research of human communication using for example, Folts, Giannini, Loiselle and Melemis (1995) to discuss non-verbal communication, and Kopp (1995) to look at the use of metaphors in psychotherapy to communicate perceived experiences.

1.6.ii Experiential learning theory

Kolb describes learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (1984, p.41). This particular type of learning theory uses the word 'experiential' to seperate it from cognitive learning theories and behavioural learning theories which, according to Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis (2001), take no account of the subjective experience in the learning process. The experiential learning model places great emphasis upon a persons subjetive processes in faciliting learning and development.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential learning model offers the idea of a cyclical form of learning that is formed of four interlinked stages of experience. These are described as the 'concrete experience' followed by 'reflective observation' leading to an 'abstract conceptualization' and eventually 'active experimentation'. The concrete experience is the event or experience that a person perceives. This experience is reflected upon and the refections are assimilated and reduced to a an abstract

concept. Once the concept is developed, active experimentation can take place to test out learning from the original concrete experience. With the use of active experimentation new concrete experiences naturally occur and so the cycle continues.

EAP is strongly related to experiential learning (Mandrell, 2006). There are several different types of experiential learning therapies that use the concept of experiencing as a vehicle for therapeutic change. Harper (1995) describes the the therapeutic process in experiential therapies as *practice.* Karol (2007) suggests that this term (practice) implies an ongoing process of learning that has no particular end. She goes on to state that a client's experience with the horse provides the foundation for therapeutic exploration with the help of the therapist. Karol notes that if a client actively engages in the experiential process then there is an opportunity to learn and practice new ways of relating to others and the world around us. These ideas are closely linked to Kolb's (1984) theory of learning and thus offers a theoretical proposal of the processes at work during experiential therapies, and in particular that of EAP.

The second domain presented by Karol (2007) is the value of relationship forming within EAP. Theories that are related to this concept will be presented next.

1.6.iii Relationship forming

Hinde (1981) suggests that within the process of forming a relationship, there are a number of features that change in quantity and intensity as the relationship develops. These eight dimensions are as follows, 1) content of interactions, 2) diversity of interactions, 3) qualities of interactions, 4) relative frequency and patterning of interactions, 5) reciprocity and complementarity, 6) intimacy, 7) interpersonal perception and, 8) commitment. Hinde argues that through these eight dimensions we can begin gain some understanding of individual relationships in relation to where they are located in each category. Of particular relevance to

EAP are perhaps the ideas suggested by dimension one, three, five, six, and seven. These will now be addressed respectively.

The 'content of the interaction' relates to the types of context within the relationship builds and the type of activities carried out whilst the relationship develops. With EAP, clients are aware of the therapeutic intentions of the psychologist who is working with them and this may affect the attitude the client has to the perceived context within which he works with the horse. Hinde (1981) states that the relationship may develop via disclosure of personal information or other signs of becoming more intimate such as inviting the other person to an event outside of the normal context within which two people might meet. The verbal interaction is clearly not possible from the horse, however, the client's disclosure of personal information whilst speaking to the horse may serve as a catalyst to perceived intimacy.

'Qualities of interactions' refer to the process rather than the content of the relationship. Duck (1999) suggest that under this heading, it is important to look at the style and the intensity of the interactions as well as the nonverbal signals exchanged between the communicating parties. Social psychologists have shown the value of nonverbal communication particularly as it '"constitutes a system by which intimacy is conveyed" (Duck, 1999, p 42). This is an important point to note in relation to EAP as much of the therapeutic process is based on nonverbal behaviour.

Hinde's (1981) 'reciprocity and complementarity' category particularly focusses upon complementary behaviours such as cheering someone up when they feel sad – a way of two opposite behaviours (acting sad, cheering up) compliment eachother to make a perfect whole (Duck, 1999). Importantly, in complimentary behaviours each person takes account of eachother's needs and this results in a less superficial relationship developping. This could be related to one practitioner's writings about her experience of EAP (Mandrell, 2006). Mandrell proposes that one of the benefits of EAP is that clients learn empathy, responsibility and patience. These qualities are related to taking account of another living creatures needs and thus there is a

potential for the development of a reciprocal and complementary relationship between horse and human.

Within the 'intimacy' domain, Hinde (1981) offers two types of intimacy, physical and psychological. The physical aspect refers to the increase of touch between two people as the level of intimacy increases. Psychological intimacy relates to the idea that the more you know someone the more you have access to their inner feelings and thoughts. Psychological intimacy then leads on to self disclosure and its function. Derlega, Margolis, Metts, & Petronio (1993)offer several ideas of social expectations around self disclosure. They suggest that you self-discose if you want to be liked and approved. The volume of self disclosure must be modified to match the level of intimacy. The level of intimacy is chageable and thus the level of self-disclosure will also escalate and de-escalate to reflect intimacy levels. Derlega et al. (1993) also believe that one person's self-disclosure will be reciprocated and this in turn can impact on the level of intimacy. Finally, the style and level of self-disclosure will expand and change as a relationship grows.

Hinde's (1981) final domain of relationship building that is of particular relevance to EAP is 'interpersonal perception'. A person's view of themselves, others and how they would like to be perceived by others is relevant in forming relationships. Within this domain Acitelli and Kenny (1989) distinguish between similarity (when there is a congruence between the way people see eachother) , perceived similarity (when person A's perception of A is the same as person A's perception of B) and understanding (when a person's view of the self is the same as the other persons view of you). Acitelli et al. (1989) suggest that these variables are particularly relevant for satisfaction within close relationships as well as the general direction a relationship takes. Duck (1999) states that in relation to perceptions of self and others it is relevant to form distinctions between the perceptions between the two different persons within the relationships. That is, it cannot be one-sided between people. Perceptions that people have may not match and this is likely to impact upon the relationship development. In relation to EAP and the client-equine relationship, Mandrell (2006) notes that horses are unable to seperate how they

feel from how they act so there is a congruence between feelings and behaviour. Thus the horse's perception of a human (demonstrated through the horse's behaviour) is likely to be an honest and true reflection of what is presented to the horse. Mandrell believes that due to this aspect of the horses nature, clients of EAP are forced to communicate with the same depth and transparency.

The perception a person has of a horse and vise versa is related to ,and impacted by the way communication between the two is carried out.

1.6.iv Communication

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is a complex and multifaceted area of psychology. The first documented research of nonverbal communication was by Charles Darwin, presented in his book *The expression of the emotions of man and animals* (1965). Darwin argues that all mammals can reliably demonstrate emotions in their facial expressions. This links the idea of using nonverbal communication within EAP as a tool for clients to understand the horses and vice versa. For the purpose of this paper, a brief synopsis of aspects of non-verbal communication relevant to EAP will be presented.

Non-verbal communication can be defined as "a general term covering any and all aspects of communication that are not expressed through the use of overt, spoken language" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p.471). Within the domain of non-verbal communication, there are different categories such as the physical environment, movement and body position and paralanguage. The area of most interest in relation to EAP appears to be movement and body position under which there are two sub categories, kinesics, and posture. Kinesics attends to body movements, facial expressions and gestures whereas posture can help to determine a person's level of attention or engagement in an activity (Hall & Knapp, 2007). A person's

posture is understood and interpreted through physical actions, such as the direction of a lean and body orientation.

Eleftheriadou (2003) believes that nonverbal communication can sometimes provide stronger messages in comparison to verbal communication. He suggests that as a clinician it is important to attend to clients' non-verbal expressions, as they are more unconscious than language and therefore more primitive. Non-verbal expressions can be more revealing than the verbal and therefore have the potential to be a powerful source of information worth attending to during therapy. In support of this, Friedman and Martin (2004) found that non-verbal communication is especially important when emotions are significant as well as in situations where verbal communications are ambiguous or generally difficult to interpret. These are typical situations that may arise within therapy and thus the attention to nonverbal communication seems to be important.

Research has shown that some potential client groups (men with major depression and obese women) manifest a significantly decreased ability to read nonverbal cues when compared to control groups (Folts, Giannini, Loiselle, & Melemis, 1995; Cerimele, Dirusso, Folts, & Giannini, 1990). If EAP can facilitate an increased insight into and experience of, this area of human communication as suggested by Karol (2007) then it may be a useful therapeutic approach for specific client groups that have a decreased ability to read nonverbal cues.

As well as nonverbal communication, Karol (2007) suggests that particular figures of speech, namely metaphors have a powerful therapeutic effect during EAP work.

Verbal communication - metaphors in therapy

A metaphor can be defined as, "a figure of speech containing an implied comparison in which a word of a phrase ordinarily used to name one thing is used for another" (p.312, Cole & Cole, 2001). According to Chandler (2005) metaphors are very useful therapeutically. Chandler suggests that metaphors can work as a form of distraction method by getting around clients' psychological defences and

resistances. The clients are often able to relate to the metaphor but are less threatened by it as it is presented *about* someone or something other than the self.

Munion and Zeig (1999) discussed the use of metaphor and imagery to speak with the client's unconscious mind. This relates to accessing the right side of the brain considered to be the less dominant hemisphere for human language functioning. The left hemisphere is considered to manage detail and coding linguistics, whereas the right is responsible for perceiving form and coding sensory input in terms of images. Therefore if as a therapist one would like to bypass the defences established by the linguistic and logic of the left hemisphere then by engaging the client in visual and symbolic metaphors this may be possible (Munion & Zeig, 1999).

Chandler (2005) further believes that when discussing a metaphor that is related to a therapeutic animal, the client will perceive and translate the metaphor through his own mental filter and this in turn offers potential insight and understanding of the clients own internal world. It is worth noting that Chandler's general use of metaphors is via telling client a metaphorical story relating to the therapy animal in the room and then discussing the client's interpretation of the story. Chandler therfore uses therapist-generated metaphors rather than client-generated ones as is used in EAP.

The use of client-generated metaphors in EAP is recognised within the practice to be of extreme importance in facilitating therapeutic change (Karol, 2007; Bivens, Klontz, Klontz, & Leinart, 2007; Klontz, Leinart, & Zugich, 2002). Mandrell (2006) suggests that the use of metaphors connects the client's visual images to words. This allows the client to link the experiences during EAP to the external world. Mandrell goes on to state that without this link being made to life situations then EAP merely becomes an in-the-moment therapeutic intervention with little long term change. The value of metaphors within therapy and their potential to offer a more long term impact is supported by research. Cummings, Hallberg and Martin (1992) looked at the therapist use of metaphor within 4 dyads of experiential psychotherapy. Results suggested that clients were able to recall approximately two-thirds of the times a therapist had used metaphors within the therapeutic

session. A second finding suggested that clients found the session that contained an intentional use of metaphor more helpful than those without. These findings support the idea that there is a therapeutic value within the use of metaphors and suggest that there may be a longer term impact to work that includes metaphoric use.

Within other psychotherapy writings (e.g., Kopp, 1995) metaphors are understood as mirrors that reflect the inner self of the client. Kopp believes that these metaphoric insights can lead to increased insight on the client's part and lead to therapeutic change. In relation to the present research methodology, it is relevant to note Kopp's idea that, "a client's methaphoric language embodies that client's metaphoric structure of of individual reality" (p. 110). This suggests that people construct their reality metaphorically. Thus by listening and attending to a clients metaphoric expression Kopp insinuates that the client and psychologist will gain increased insight to the client's reality and lived experiences of the world– something the present research methodology places great emphasis upon (see Analysis section for further details on the methodological approach).

All three previously mentioned points about how EAP might be helpful to clients (experiential learning theory, relationship forming and communication) are not researched concepts in relation to EAP rather, they are current EAP practitioners' own experiences of EAP (or Equine facilitated psychotherapy EFP) combined with their own theoretical grounding. These ideas should therefore be considered with an awareness of their lack of direct research support in relation to EAP. Bivens et al. (2007) suggest that future research in EAP might benefit from a study that unpacks the current knowledge of the benefits of EAP. In line with this, it is of interest to consider Karol's (2006) previously listed six areas of EAP's therapeutic processes.

This type of study would require an in-depth understanding of the way participants experience EAP in order to begin to separate out what part of client progress is related to EAP, and which part is related to the more traditional therapeutic interventions being run in parallel with the EAP work. The present study hopes to begin to shed some light upon this issue.

It is also worth noting that the proposed hypothesis above relating to the possible reasons of how EAP may be therapeutic, are based on different theoretical orientations. Both psychodynamic and Cognitive Behavioural approaches have been used. For the purpose of this paper, it was important to cover all proposed ideas to help the reader gain a comprehensive picture of the current mixture of theoretical approaches used in EAP. The researcher recognizes the need for a specific therapeutic orientation within which to locate the present research and as stated will do so using the previously mentioned theoretical framework of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with a humanistic experiential view to approach the findings of the present study.

In addition to having an underpinning theoretical framework to interpret and discuss the research findings, it is also important to provide the reader with clear links between Counselling Psychology, the chosen participant sample and the EAP approach to treatment. The following section of the present chapter addresses these required links.

1.7 Linking Counselling Psychology, addictive behaviour and Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

The Counselling Psychology profession deals with a broad spectrum of mental health issues. One such mental health problem is addictive behaviour.

1.7.i Addictive behaviour

In the UK, the most widely spread professional use of EAP appears to be with addictions (e.g. The Priory, Stepps, Sporting Chance). However, research in relation to EAP and addictions is limited. Despite this lack of empirical evidence, EAP is

gaining in popularity in the mental health community, particularly addictions and young clients, mainly because of the practical success with clients being so overwhelming (Thomas, 2002).

The scope of the present study does not include a detailed discussion of addiction. However, it is important to define what the term addiction refers to and how this is relevant to the present research.

Orford (2001) argues the importance of not limiting the term addiction to that of drug and alcohol dependence. He suggests that, "it is not to 'substances' that we are at risk of becoming addicted, but rather to 'objects and activities' of which drugs are a special example" (p. 2). Addiction under this description therefore includes all 'excessive appetites' such as gambling, sex, eating, drugs and exercise. Orford argues that humans have a natural development of desires and inclinations but it is when these become out of the person's control and that person no longer feels able to moderate the behavior that an addiction develops. This can result in long-term difficulties with-in relationships, employment, family dynamics, and the general social functioning of the person experiencing addictive behaviours.

The aetiology of addictive behavior has been linked to early childhood trauma. Dayton (2000) suggests that trauma leads to emotional illiteracy. By not having processed, the trauma Dayton states that the results can manifest themselves in psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, anger, and difficulties within interpersonal relationships. When these difficulties arise, Dayton argues that there is a tendency for people to self-medicate with addictive behaviours. The self-medication serves to avoid emotional discomfort and numb psychological pain. With the continued use of addictive behaviours to facilitate this process of releasing 'feel-good' chemicals in the brain whilst reducing emotional discomfort the coping mechanism evolves into an addictive behavior out of the person's control. This leads to increased psychological distress and so the cycle continues.

EAP is proposed to be a useful adjunct therapeutic approach for a variety of psychological difficulties (EAGALA). One of these, as previously stated is addiction.

There are several EAP programs across the United States and Great Britain that utilise EAP as part of their therapeutic approach to addiction. One such addiction programme called 'Onsite' (in the United States) subscribes to the trauma model of addiction as described above. The 'Onsite' program philosophy believes that EAP is useful in dealing with unresolved trauma by facilitating a process of providing immediate access to the cognitive and affective responses related to the trauma and resulting addictive behavior. This offers an opportunity for the client to process and begin to become more emotionally literate, thus providing insight into the emotional distress being experienced. In addition, EAP is also described as being a useful tool to teach clients recovering from addiction certain life skills that newly sober individuals need in order to stay sober (Klontz, Leinart, & Zugich, 2002). Specifics of what these skills entail are not discussed in the paper. However, these may relate to the skills mentioned by Mandrell (2006), such as boundary awareness and communication skills.

Addiction is a complex psychological problem that is often treated by psychologists. A more explicit link between the addiction and Counselling Psychology will now follow.

1.7.ii Counselling Psychology and addictive behaviour

Clients who present with addictive problems often present with secondary psychosocial and health problems (Emptage, Hubbard & Pringle, 2006). Several co-occurring problems were identified in a study by Durell, Hagan, McLennan, Meyers and Randall (1997). These include depression (53% of clients), violence (35%), unstable housing (11%), severe family problems, limited social support, limited educational achievement, unemployment and financial problems (41%) and involvement in illegal acts. These problems can often lead to hospital admissions and in 2004/5, around 35,600 people were admitted to NHS hospitals with a

primary diagnosis of mental health and behavioural disorders due to alcohol (The Information Centre, NHS, 2006). Despite extensive research into addiction treatment and seemingly promising approaches the problem has not reduced and national statistics suggest that alcohol and drugs are now being introduced around the aged of 11-15 (The Information Centre, NHS, 2005).

Therefore, it is relevant to look further a-field at new and creative approaches to deal with this increasing national problem. EAP is one potential therapeutic approach that has shown positive practical outcomes. It was first introduced into an inpatient addiction programme in the early '90s at the Sierra Tucson Treatment Centre in Tucson Arizona (Klontz, Leinart, & Zugich, 2002). Due to its apparent effectiveness the number of addiction programs that include EAP has vastly increased.

Counselling Psychology is not the only discipline in the therapeutic world that deals with addictive behaviours. Therefore, it raises the question of why it is relevant to research EAP under the umbrella of Counselling Psychology. The answer lies partly in the underlying philosophical values of the discipline.

1.7.iii Counselling Psychology philosophy and Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

Counselling Psychology places a strong emphasis on "the empathic engagement of the psychologist with the world of the client" (Strawbridge and Woolfe, 2003, p.8). Practical work with EAP has shown the potential to facilitate this process via the idiographic insight provided into to client's internal world through the horse's unique reactions to each client (Jarrell, 2005). In addition, in line with the humanistic paradigm as previously discussed, Counselling Psychology practice also involves looking at a client's subjective experiences, processes, meanings, and

feelings. EAP encourages this via in-vivo experiences that facilitate the client's personal insight and reflections upon the EAP processes. These links between EAP and Counselling Psychology validate further empirical research into EAP to explore if it can be considered a valid adjunct therapeutic tool to be used by Counselling Psychologists to as a compliment to current addiction work.

With the growing amount of anecdotal support for EAP, it is now time to research the therapeutic approach. Although EAP is a relatively new concept, lack of research and need for rigorous scrutiny should not be used as premature justification for dismissal of this novel and potentially useful therapeutic concept. On the contrary, research should be carried out to investigate if it is a valid therapeutic intervention to use within Counselling Psychology practice.

It is hoped that Counselling Psychology will embrace new ideas and support practitioners in researching diverse areas of therapeutic intervention. This will encourage Counselling Psychology as a body to be seen as creative and willing to be at the forefront of new psychological research in order to push the boundaries of more established modalities of intervention.

1.8 Purpose of study

The previously cited studies of EAP are mainly based on outcome measures, and there is currently no published research available that has looked at the psychological processes that take place during EAP sessions.

The present study will aim to explore these psychological processes. The focus of this study will be placed on client's lived experiences of EAP and how they perceive the therapeutic experience. By trying to uncover the specific psychological experiences that facilitate therapeutic change in participants, one can begin to

develop a model of their perception of the psychological processes at work during EAP. This type of research has not been attempted previously.

Research and case studies of EAP report efficacy in the therapeutic practice but without an understanding of how participants perceive and experience the therapeutic approach there will be limited scope for future empirical scrutiny and thus the approach will remain limited to 'followers' rather than have the chance of becoming a future integrated adjunct therapy in psychological theory and practice. Therefore, the study will ask, what are the participants' lived experiences during EAP and how might these be perceived to facilitate psychological change? From the research results, a model of the participants' experiences of EAP will be proposed based upon the thematic analysis. It is important to note, this is not a process model rather a model of the thematic analysis and appropriate linkages between the found themes. This will provide a starting point from which future research can test and evaluate the thematic model allowing sound empirical research to be carried out.

2.0 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

2.1 Methodology

In choosing a methodology, it was important to link it clearly to the purpose of the research. The aim of the present study was to investigate participants' lived experience of EAP. This was to be done in order for the researcher to propose a thematically based model of the psychological processes, at work during EAP, that potentially serve to facilitate change in clients. To clarify, at this early stage, the aim was not to develop a deductive theory as such, rather to open up the EAP research arena by exploring the experiences of EAP clients. This will aid the currently embryonic stage of EAP research to deepen the understanding of the participants' experiences during EAP and thus develop a platform from which further EAP research can be developed.

This type of research clearly does not lend itself to a quantitative research methodology which is deductive in nature and is, for example, useful when comparing and contrasting data from different participant groups. Qualitative research methodologies do not take such a positivist stance, assuming an ultimate truth. Rather, they attend to the participants' personal accounts of their own individual reality (Ashworth, 2008). Therefore, this study required a qualitative approach. However, the choice of methodology needed further refining as there are several qualitative research methods that have over-lapping philosophical principles but each with individual qualities that require the researcher's awareness in order to make an informed methodological choice. There are numerous types of qualitative research methods that one could argue might serve to answer the present research question. These include: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Discourse Analysis and Grounded theory. For the present research

study, IPA was the methodology of choice. The justification of this decision will follow shortly but firstly the two alternative approaches will be considered to facilitate a transparent understanding of the researcher's choice of methodology.

Discourse Analysis is used to explore naturally occurring data (Willig, 2008). It addresses what participants are 'doing' with their discourse and focuses on the variability and fluidity of the discourse. The focus of this methodology is strongly placed on the participants' use of language and how it is used to construct a social reality (Willig, 2008). The focus of Discourse Analysis is therefore less on the experience of the participants but rather on their use of language in relation to the research topic. Therefore, due to its focus on use of language to construct a social reality, this qualitative approach was unlikely to target the desired analytic information in relation to expanding the current EAP research literature's understanding of the participants' experiences.

Grounded theory utilises prescriptive step-by-step analytic guidelines to facilitate the research process. It seeks to gather data, synthesise and analyse, and finally conceptualise the data to ultimately construct theory (Charmaz, 2001). It uses a large heterogeneous sampling approach to facilitate theoretical sampling in order to refine conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2008). This is in contrast to other qualitative research methods that utilise smaller homogenous sampling to represent a specific population. The present research study sought to explore a novel and new therapeutic intervention and thus the aim of the study was not to construct theory but rather to explore and expand the current understanding of EAP. The choice to not use Grounded Theory was therefore based on the premise that it would be premature to theorise about EAP processes considering the lack of exploratory research in the area. Grounded Theory may well prove highly relevant at a later stage of EAP research.

Therefore, for the present study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) informed the construction of the semi-structured interviews and was used to analyse the resultant data.

As previously mentioned the aim of the present study is the in-depth exploration of the experiences of EAP clients. IPA methodology is particularly suited to this due to its underlying philosophical links to phenomenology and hermeneutics (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Phenomenology is related to "the way thing appear to us in experience; the reality that we live is an experiential one and it is experienced through practical engagements with things and others in the world, and it is inherently meaningful." (Eatough et al., 2008, p.2).

IPA is phenomenological in the way it seeks to explore and understand the way individuals perceive their own experiences rather than looking for an objective universal truth about the experience. It is this experience that the present study seeks to engage with.

IPA has both a long and a short history of origin (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Its actual development as a specific qualitative approach was articulated in the mid 1990's (Smith, 1994, 1996) however, the underlying philosophical underpinnings reach back to the founder of phenomenology as a philosophical movement, Edmund Husserl (Ashworth, 2003). Husserl rejected the idea that there was something more fundamental than a person's experience itself. Rather, he suggested that what is *experienced* should be understood as a 'reality' and investigations of the person should begin with the experience itself. Phenomenology therefore focuses on the person's reality of experiences, as they appear, that is, the 'phenomenon'.

The difficulty with studying the human experience as described above is that it cannot be directly approached, as the very nature of reflecting on what is experienced distorts the phenomenon itself (Moran, 2000). That is, any process of reflection is carried out through the cultural, experiential, and historical filter of the reflector (Eatough & Smith, 2008). To that end, IPA is also historically rooted within Heidegger's idea of 'factical' existence, meaning; the way experience appears to the person in her/his own way. In addition, IPA is strongly influenced by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. Therefore, Heidegger's proposal of 'hermeneutics of factial life' (Eatough et al. 2008, p.2) links with IPA in that the latter seeks to explore

a person's *lived experience* of an event in order to understand how it is experienced and given meaning by the individual person.

The idea of a lived experience resonates with the experiential learning theory presented in the introduction of this paper as relevant to EAP practice. EAP is by its nature experiential. The participant's experience of active engagement with the horse, the therapists and his own cognitions, behaviours and feelings, becomes the reality in which the client experiences life at that moment in time. IPA takes the stance that this experience and the meanings the client may attach to this experience become their reality and thus it is 'inherently meaningful'. This experience can begin to be analysed by looking at the interview transcripts and developing common themes between participants. However, sole analysis of the interview transcripts cannot produce the level of analysis that the present study seeks. It requires the engagement of the researcher into the world of the participant – a journey into the phenomenon that is the participants' experience. This is where a unique methodological aspect of IPA becomes vital.

IPA is interested in how the words in the transcribed text link to underlying cognitions (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). Unlike other qualitative methods, IPA does not stop at the analysis of the *words* said by each participant but looks at the meaning and how they are expressed, presented and therefore experienced by each participant. This requires the researcher to deeply engage with each participant's experience and IPA therefore allows and accepts the researcher's own ability to reflect and analyse transcripts as part of the hermeneutic research process. This process of participant and researcher both contributing to the analysis of the spoken words has the potential to produce a very in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of EAP clients. It is a 'bottom up' process that aims to avoid any preconceived ideas of the researcher and has the potential to open up doors to new and unexpected findings, thus being inductive rather than deductive – one of the main aims of the present study. This interpretative engagement by the researcher raises issues of methodological validity and will this be addressed shortly.

As well as the 'fit' of the IPA methodology to the present study aim, there is an additional justification for choosing IPA as a method. The processes at work during IPA research have strong similarities to some of the experiences of a Counselling Psychologist when working with a client. This is not stated to blur the lines between research and clinical practice, rather to emphasise the link between IPA methodology and Counselling Psychology's underpinning philosophies. Smith and Osbourne (2003) suggest that IPA is not purely about the participant's words but also about the reflective capabilities of the researcher. Counselling Psychology requires strong reflective skills of both the processes at work between client and psychologist but also on the personal processes at work during therapeutic interactions. This practice helps the psychologist to be aware of her own preconceived ideas, biases and cognitions within the session. The IPA research approach therefore fits in well with the reflective practitioner philosophy of Counselling Psychology and offers a link between the present research aim and the researcher's chosen practice.

Additionally, IPA has a strong focus upon ideography (Eatough & Smith, 2008). This involves the interest in a single case and valuing the subjective and 'interpersonal involvedness of human emotion, thought and action...' (Eatough et al., 2008, p.6). This provides yet another strong link to Counselling Psychology. The latter also places great emphasis upon a person's subjective experiences of feeling and meaning as well as the acceptance of the client's description of his or her internal world as valid with no need to seek an objective 'truth'. Due to theses similarities between IPA and Counselling Psychology the skills of the latter are likely to be valuable when executing IPA and this methodology should be 'comfortable' within the reflective, idiographic stance of the Counselling Psychologist researcher.

2.2 Participants

The participant group consisted of men, aged between 18-65 years of age. The mean age was 39 years and all participants described themselves as White middle class.

Eight participants were interviewed for the study. Smith and Osbourne (2003) suggest five to six participants to be an appropriate number for student projects using IPA. Considering the academic level of this study and as EAP is a new research area it was vital to gain theoretical saturation. Thus, eight participants were chosen as a guide to meet these requirements. A pilot study was also carried out, making the total number of participants nine.

Research on addiction suggests that there are gender differences showing different needs and characteristics in treatment settings (Addington, El-Guebaly, Hodgins, 1997). The effect of a therapeutic treatment (i.e. EAP) may therefore have a varied impact upon different gender groups. As the study was interested in exploring specific therapeutic processes as experienced by participants during the EAP sessions, it was important, at this early stage of research, to study a homogenous gender group and therefore only men within the addiction clinic were interviewed.

Participants were inpatients at a 12-step addiction treatment clinic. The 12-step programme is a set of guiding principles for recovery from all types of addiction. It is an attempt to address changes in a person with symptoms of addiction that include changes in personal values and interpersonal behaviour as well as directly tackling the addictive behaviours (Castandeda, Francis, Franco, & Galanter, 2005). Each step within the 12-step programme involves making changes in behaviour and attitude that serve to profoundly change the client's life. For instance, step one involves admitting that one cannot control one's addiction or compulsion consequently breaking with denial (Castandeda *et al.*, 2005).

In order to recruit participants, the researcher contacted the Sporting Chance clinic and liaised with the clinical director to access potential participants. The clinical director's role in the process was to organize an initial meeting between researcher and potential participants. This took place at the Sporting Chance clinic. At the first meeting the potential participants were introduced to the study via meeting the researcher at the clinic. They were given an information sheet and were offered time to ask any questions several days before the interview time. Each participant was asked to consider their participation in the research after the researcher had left and to let the clinical director know if they would like to go ahead with participating in the research. Finally, the clinical director contacted the researcher to advice her of any available participants and to organize time and location of interviews (at the clinic).

Research on addiction treatment suggests that there are gender differences shown when addressing client needs and characteristics in addiction treatment (Addington, El-Guebaly, & Hodgins, 1997). Therefore, the effect of different treatments may have varied efficacy upon different gender groups. As the present study was interested in exploring experiential processes during EAP and in light of the aforementioned addiction research issues, it was important, at this early stage of research, to study a homogenous group to maximise the likelyhood of gaining rich data with strong thematic links. The homogeneity in the present group lies within gender and in addition, all participants were professional (active or retired) competitive sports people and all presented with a minimum of one type of addiction, hence referral to the clinic. Finally, all participants completed the 3 ½ week inpatient programme and attended three 2 ½ hr EAP sessions once every week as part of their treatment.

2.3 Materials

Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder. For each participant interview, one piece of paper with the semi-structured interview questions was used. A note pad and pen for note taking was available to the researcher for recording post interview notes. During each interview, the researcher used one information sheet, one consent form and one debriefing form. All the interviews took place in a room within the addiction clinic premises.

2.4 Procedure

The research method used for the present study was qualitative. It was carried out using semi-structured interviews and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Participants were interviewed once only. All interviews were digitally recorded for transcribing. An Information Sheet (see Appendix Ai) was given to the participants prior to the interview. Each participant was offered an opportunity to ask questions prior to signing the Consent Form (see Appendix Aii). At this point the researcher made an effort to build up a rapport with each participant in order to encourage the participant to speak freely and reduce any anxiety around participating in the study. At the end of each interview, the participant was given a Debrief sheet (see Appendix Aiii) and offered help with accessing appropriate support if necessary. All interviews were then transcribed in full on a computer in the researcher's office off the clinic premises.

A pilot study was carried out to assess the quality of the research questions and to test the logistics of the interview process. This provided an opportunity to discover which type of questions evoked the most informative answers as well as highlight any practical difficulties around the study (see Pilot Study section).

The interviews were analysed one at the time. Each interview was initially listened to whilst being read and the researcher's immediate thoughts, ideas and themes were noted in the right hand column next to relevant text in the transcript. The transcript was then re-read twice and further notes were added before potential themes were written next to relevant text in the left hand column of the transcript. Once all themes were exhausted in the transcript, themes in the left hand column were listed in full, on a separate piece of paper. Then, the themes were clustered into thematically linked groups. Potential superordinate themes were given to each group in order to summarise the concepts within each cluster. During this process, themes that did not fit into the clusters or seemed less psychologically relevant were discarded. Themes that were not clearly in a group but of potential interest in answering the research question were revisited within the full context of the transcript and either discarded or kept depending on their relevance and links to other thematic clusters (see Appendix D for sample annotated transcript). This process was carried out with all transcripts and the themes were then cross-matched between interviews to form final clusters of subordinate themes under the heading of superordinate themes. The researcher analysed the transcripts in depth and remained mindful of engaging totally with the text to obtain the deepest analysis level possible and thus reach an interpretative level of analysis not simply a descriptive one.

2.5 Interview questions

The interview questions aimed to target the participants' lived experiences of EAP and to explore each participant's individual understanding of these processes. (see Appendix B for Interview Schedule). On developing a semi-structured interview schedule, Smith and Osborn (2003) suggest that it is useful to have overarching areas of interests in the schedule. For the present study the question domains were divided into the participants' beliefs and experiences of EAP before, during and

after the therapeutic experience. This was to facilitate and encourage the participants' story-telling of the EAP experience and to attempt to unpack the experiences in a chronological order whilst gaining maximum detail available. As well as telling their individual 'story' of EAP -questions were also asked about the perception of the therapists' role in the EAP processes. This was asked to gain further insight into the processes at work between participant and therapist during the EAP experience. Furthermore the participants were asked about their view of EAP within their total experience of being an inpatient. This question was targeted at gaining further information about how participants perceived the experience of EAP within their total treatment programme.

2.6 Pilot study

Following the pilot it became clear that practically the interviews could not take place after all treatment at the clinic was completed. Initially the interviews were going to take place directly after the completion of treatment but before the participants left the clinic. However, when organising the pilot interview it became clear that the logistics of this process were complex and the interviews had to be moved from the end of clinic treatment, to end of EAP treatment (Saturday before discharge on the following Friday) but whilst the participants remained in treatment. This created further ethical issues that had to be addressed such as (a) interviewing *inpatients* rather than discharged clients made participants potentially more vulnerable (b) recruiting whilst participants were inpatients could make them more suggestible and unable to refuse participation in the study, and (c) the recent completion of their EAP work could mean that previously unexplored issues may appear during the research interviews and these could potentially expose the participants to a vulnerable state during and post interview.

To address these ethical issues a proposal was written to answer how they could be dealt with. The full proposal was accepted by the university ethics committee and the interviewing of participants was commenced. Please refer to Appendix C for the complete proposal. A summary of the report is presented in section 2.7 of this chapter.

In addition to the ethical issues, the pilot interview also revealed that most of the semi-structured questions were useful for obtaining information about the participant's lived experiences of EAP. One question, relating to the participants' specific EAP learning experience about their addiction, was removed due to potential vulnerability of the participants. This question was removed as they were still in inpatient treatment at the time of interview and thus potentially more vulnerable than originally believed. Otherwise the interview schedule was not changed.

2.7 Ethical issues

To address the first ethical issue of interviewing inpatients, qualitative research carried out with other vulnerable populations was explored. One such population was bereaved participants interviewed about their experience of loss. Roosenblatt (2000) suggests extra attention should be paid to the researchers' awareness of being supportive and non-judgmental. In addition, Cook and Bosley (1995) suggest the researcher's skills in showing empathy and understanding are the most helpful qualities in supporting the potentially vulnerable participant group. Usher and Holmes (1997) note the importance of time limits such as maximum 1hr per interview.

In response to the first ethical issue therefore, the following ethical steps were suggested in the submitted report. Offer to suspend interview if signs of distress were present (researcher to be acutely aware of affect changes in participants),

interviews set to a 1hr time limit, interviews to take place outside of participants therapy schedule, and participants to be asked several times during their interviews whether they are happy to continue.

The second ethical issue in relation to gaining informed consent from inpatients required further consideration of the recruitment process. Usher and Holmes (1997) suggests that one way to gain informed consent with vulnerable participants is for the researcher to meet with the participants prior to the interview date to explain the research purpose and clarify the difference between the research aim and the therapy the participants are undergoing. In addition, McLeod (1999) also suggests that participants need to be able to contact an independent arbitrator if they feels unable to decline consent directly to the researcher. The researcher of the present study proposed a pre-interview meeting with potential participants two days before the interviews to explain the above. In addition, just before the interview, the freedom to withdraw consent would be verbally reiterated and the details of the independent arbitrator given in written form to each participant.

Finally, the third ethical issue of potential emotional distress was addressed. Cook (1995) found that despite the interview of bereaved participants being described as 'emotional' it was not experienced as 'stressful'. In fact, participants reported some benefits of the experience of being interviewed about their loss. In addition, Rosenblatt (2000) argues that participants may find a therapeutic benefit in naming and describing their experiences. Therefore, there is the potential for the experience to be beneficial rather than harmful. During the interviews for the present research, the researcher proposed that she was to remain mindful of potential distress and in addition, to liaise with the on-site therapist pre-interview, in case further support was necessary following the interview process.

2.7 Validity

As previously mentioned IPA is a subjective process and thus raises questions about validity. As the use of IPA requires the individual interpretation of the researcher it is prone to biases. Smith (1995) suggests a process of researcher reflection in order to identify and address the possible influencing factors created by the researcher. This would potentially serve to provide transparency within the study and thus provide the reader with the most extensive insight possible into the research process and analysis.

Further validity can be strived for by following principles of validity with qualitative research (Yardley, 2008). Yardley proposes three main principles. Firstly she suggests 'sensitivity in context' in which the research is located. This can be carried out a number of ways. Firstly, the study needs to be placed in context of an in-depth review and understanding of relevant theoretical and empirical literature. This allows the researcher to show an understanding of the current research field whilst validating the choice of the present research question as worthwhile by potentially being able to fill gaps in current knowledge. Clearly this is preferable to producing a replica study that merely serves to rediscover previous studies' research findings.

Yardley (2008) also suggests that validity can be shown via the researcher's transparency in the analysis of data and a reflective capability about her own potential influences on the outcome of the data analysis. For the present study, the analysis process was carried out with a strong awareness of the researcher's own biases, and these will be discussed in detail in the Reflective Summary at the end of the Discussion. Validity was further increased by all typed transcripts being double checked by a third party.

Yardley's second principle involves "commitment', rigour, transparency and coherence". Long-term commitment as suggested by Yardley is hard to provide at the researcher's present stage of training as it requires long-term proof of

commitment to the specific research topic. However, during the post-graduate training (including an M-level thesis), the researcher's main interest has been in the value of animals in a therapeutic role and thus a history of commitment is beginning to evolve. With reference to rigour, transparency and coherence, it is hoped this was achieved through a demonstration of clear relationships between the different sections in the analysis section and the final conclusion that reflects the research aim. It is hoped that transparency is obvious and there is a clear distinction between participant quotes and researcher interpretations throughout both the analysis and discussion.

The third Yardley principle of "impact and importance" refers to the value of the research findings, that is, whether the research uncovers any new and useful material that could make a difference within the researched field. Ultimately this has to be a decision for the reader to make; however, it is hoped that the final discussion and concluding comments will help to argue the significance of the findings in relation to the specific area of EAP research as well as the possible implications for Counselling Psychology.

3.0 ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Throughout the initial analysis of all transcripts, 56 initial themes emerged. As the themes from each transcript were repeatedly organised, re-organised and reduced during the course of the cross analysis of all interview data, they finally emerged into five thematically linked groups. These were subsequently organised under superordinate theme headings. Table 1 shows an overview of the five superordinate themes. Next to each of these super ordinate groups are the linked sub-themes and the last column in Table 1 shows the location of related quotes within all the participants' transcripts. Table 1 includes the summary of seven participants out of the eight interviewed. The eighth participant Christian provided very contrasting themes to the initial seven participants and his interview transcript was therefore analysed separately. Full justification for this decision within the analytic process will be provided at the beginning of Christian's analysis section. See Table 2 for a summary of Christian's themes, subthemes and related quote locations.

The final five superordinate themes for Table 1 are:

- Accessing the internal self
- Experiencing the external world
- Forming a relationship
- Therapeutic change
- Participants' individual thematic experiences

The analysis is presented in the above order of super ordinate themes followed by detailed analysis of all subthemes. Each quote is followed by a reference to its

location in the original interview transcript. For example Jake (2.59) means, the quote is taken from Jake's interview and can be found on page 2, line 59. All names used throughout the present study are pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants.

Appendix D provides a sample transcript that shows the analytic process using annotations in the margin. Table 1 and 2 provide page and line numbers relevant to each specific quote for ease of reference.

Table 1. Master table of themes

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Jake	Simon	Danny	Peter	Greg	Clive	Piers
Accessing the internal self	○ *Mirroring of behaviour and internal states*	2.79	1.30	3.72, 19.701	2.63	6.256	8.281 14.515	15.652
	○ *EAP as a trigger*	8.311 7.304	2.51 4.143	2.47 2.52	5.208	5.179	-	2.69 9.394
	○ *Experiencing calm internal states*	3.128 -	-	3.104	7.305	4.158 6.230	6.173 10.340	-
Experiencing the external world	○ *Reflections of real life difficulties*	6.254	-	11.401	10.455	13.580	-	2.73
	○ *Relationship comparisons*	6.233 6.255	3.91 3.118	17.653	-	-	10.356	-
Forming a relationship	○ *Communication*	3.121	8.310	13.475	3.147	-	3.66	-
	○ *Forming a connection*	6.246	2.63	14.519	3.115	4.156	3.52	12.525 3.107
	○ *Reciprocal processes of relating*	4.158	4.125	23.869	4.192	2.76	8.275 10.328	4.174
	○ *Being at one*	-	2.65 5.188 5.191	15.568 15.575	10.493	6.270	6.178	-

Table 1. (continued) **Master table of themes**

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Jake	Simon	Danny	Peter	Greg	Clive	Piers
Therapeutic change	○ *Cognitive flexibility*	-	4.154 7.250	-	9.430	13.587	17.616	9.405
	○ *Increased insight*	10.411	4.153	16.589	9.428	7.307	10.357	9.379
	○ *Sense of achievement*	-	3.116	2.66 4.122	5.216	12.549	4.508	11.499
	○ *Increased self confidence*	-	3.120	16.602 3.93	-	2.63	11.380	-
	○ *Utilising visually descriptive language*	6.229 7.287 7.304 8.345 9.368	2.65 3.91 4.157 5.189 5.195 7.250	4.148 12.434 15.537 21.786	2.63 4.156 4.197 9.414	8.338	3.50 3.78 11.373 15.545 15.558 16.581 17.611 17.638	9.379

Table 1. (continued) **Master table of themes**

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes	Jake	Simon	Danny	Peter	Greg	Clive	Piers
Participants' individual thematic experiences	○ *Control and rejection*	4.136	-	-	-	-	-	-
		4.143	-	-	-	-	-	-
		6.227	-	-	-	-	-	-
		10.404	-	-	-	-	-	-
	○ *Meeting emotional needs*	-	3.94	-	-	-	-	-
		-	3.97	-	-	-	-	-
		-	3.102	-	-	-	-	-
		-	8.305	-	-	-	-	-
	○ *Reciprocity of trust*	-	-	7.240	-	-	-	-
		-	-	9.324	-	-	-	-
		-	-	10.369	-	-	-	-
		-	-	11.394	-	-	-	-
		-	-	11.409	-	-	-	-
		-	-	12.459	-	-	-	-
		-	-	15.553	-	-	-	-
		-	-	15.564	-	-	-	-
		-	-	25.928	-	-	-	-
	○ *Internalising the power of the horse*	-	-	-	1.25	-	-	-
		-	-	-	3.127	-	-	-
		-	-	-	9.410	-	-	-
		-	-	-	10.492	-	-	-

Table 1. (continued). **Master table of themes**

Superordinate themes	Subthemes	Jake	Simon	Danny	Peter	Greg	Clive	Piers
Participants individual thematic experiences	○ *Addictive patterns as filter for EAP experience.*	-	-	-	-	4.149	-	-
		-	-	-	-	9.395	-	-
		-	-	-	-	9.403	-	-
		-	-	-	-	10.438	-	-
	○ *Experiencing the 'true' self*	-	-	-	-	-	18.654	-
		-	-	-	-	-	15.544	-
		-	-	-	-	-	15.557	-
		-	-	-	-	-	16.580	-
		-	-	-	-	-	17.611	-
		-	-	-	-	-	17.616	-
	○ *Accessing the emotional self*	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.408
		-	-	-	-	-	-	10.410
		-	-	-	-	-	-	13.563
								13.573

Table 2. **Christian's individual analysis – Superordinate themes and subordinate themes.**

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Location of relevant quotes within transcript.
Fear as a restrictor	○ *Fear of horses*	18.794 13.589
	○ *Inability to relate*	3.133 4.145 9.399 9.367
	○ *Relaxation through environmental factors*	18.782 7.304 12.537 7.284 6.239 15.654

3.2 Accessing the internal self

Throughout the interviews there was a strong consensus between participants about the way their experience of EAP facilitated an increased cognitive as well as emotional access to their internal selves.

'The internal self' relates to the participants' descriptions of their internal emotions and cognitions when being with the horse. Most participants held the belief that the horse was able to read or sense his internal states and some experienced the horses to mirror this internal state behaviourally. That is, the participants perceived that the horses instinctively sensed what the participant was feeling and sometimes thinking in the moment. In addition, the EAP processes appear to have triggered powerful internal experiences (cognitive and emotional). The participants described this to have happened as direct consequences of their work with the horses. The subordinate themes located under the present section are as follows, 'Mirroring of participant behaviour and internal states', 'EAP as a trigger' and 'Experiencing calm internal states'. These will be presented in the order listed.

Mirroring of behaviour and internal states

All of the participants described a belief in the horses being able to sense and respond to the internal states of the humans. Most participants described times when they had experienced the horses to be reflecting the participants' internal states in a behavioural response. The participants described emotions ranging from feeling hesitant to extreme fear. The horses' behavioural responses to the participants' internal processes were understood and interpreted to be reflections of how the participants were feeling at the time. Some participants described

feeling aware of this process and actively making an effort to alter the situation by changing their own internal states and thus influencing the horse's behavioural reactions to them. Others were more passive, accepting the mirroring as a process but not actively using it as a tool. Jake for example, suggested that the horses could sense the groups mood overall but did not expand on his insight:

> *"... there was definitely something they could sense because the whole thing was calm today, we were all quite relaxed and there was no one moaning about going and the horses all seemed quite relaxed and it may just be a coincidence but that one horse last week was clearly in a bad mood itself but also I think it could tell the things that we were a bit, anti going there at the time." (2.79)*

Simon explicitly described his belief of the horse's tendency to mirror human behaviour and emotions whilst suggesting some ability to control the situation by feeling calm himself:

> *"...if you approach them eh, gingerly and eh, nervously they will do the same they will back off and eh, there so really they were getting confidence thing and I did that and eh, I approached it cause I felt quite comfortable" (1.30)*

Peter experienced initially feeling fearful and the horse reacting fearfully to his internal state:

> *"...Eh, to begin with it was a bit of a nightmare, I think the horse sensed that I was a bit, a bit worried a bit anxious and scared and you know so of course it was reacting the same sort of way, it was really sort of [pulls back physically in the chair to imitate horse moving away] when I was stroking it, it was sort of flicking its tail and doing all sorts of things. Eh, but yeah I gave up with the head piece for a couple of minutes, just gave, stroked it and sort of stroking its nose and just trying to calm the horse down a*

bit – trying to calm me down aswell! [laughs] And eh, yeah I started to feel a bit more confident around her eh, and eventually sort of put the head piece on, connected the piece of rope and started walking the horse around, and that is quite nice. I got a lot of satisfaction from that, strange as it sounds..." (2.63)

Peter's experience suggests that his motivation to calm the horse was based on his own fear of the situation. By influencing the horse and keeping it calm Peter felt reduced anxiety and thus was able to relax more. This change in internal state for Peter provided him with the confidence to try new things with the horse and this ultimately resulted in a sense of achievement. This sense of achievement was possibly due to the experience of feeling challenged, dealing directly with his anxieties in the moment and thus being able to work with the horse – suggesting an ability to overcome anxiety provoking situations.

Danny also reported a sense of achievement when working with the horses. However, his internal state was more frustration rather than anxiety. Never-the-less the horses reaction helped to increase his awareness of the feelings as he experienced a direct link between his own frustration and the horse's behavioural response to him. And like Peter, Danny went through the process of a) his internal state being reflected in the horse, b) the participant then making clear decisions to change the situation and c) the resultant behaviour from the horse being experienced as pleasurable and offering a sense of achievement:

"So you do it again and again and the more, what I found the more upset I got, or the more annoyed I got, the less I was going to get from the horse. So we do what they have taught us with our breathing and bits and pieces and what we have already learnt, trying to apply some of that to it. And then once you have actually calmed down, and you have got yourself in the space you need to be, the horse then follows. It was amazing to say the least" (2.74).

When listening to Danny expressing this particular experience of being with the horse, I felt an immediate understanding and sense of relating to his experience. Memories of personal experiences of being with horses were triggered, particularly at times when I have had feelings of frustration and been going though personal distress. My experiences of being with horses at these times were very similar to Danny's description of the horses reacting to his emotional state. This process of me relating to the participant's words is likely to have been communicated on some level to Danny (through my tone of voice or perhaps body-language) during the interview process and this may have encouraged him to express more of these particular aspects of his EAP experiences. Interestingly, Danny's individual thematic experience was 'reciprocity of trust' relating to experiencing the horses' tendency to respond to a humans internal emotions much as the above quote. Perhaps, Danny expressed this aspect of his EAP experience in greater detail due to my potential encouragement of it.

Danny went on in his interview to explain how his experience of the horses sensing how he was feeling helped him to become more aware of his own internal states as well as of his surroundings:

> *"when you are sober and you are in an environment like this it brings out things you didn't even know were there, hence the thing with the horses, things that...you say about the horses being aware of what we are thinking and doing from our body language and everything else. You are far more aware of everybody else around you and they are far more aware of you" (17.713).*

This quote suggests an increased awareness, not only of himself but of the world around him. Danny comments on how he has discovered 'things' that he did not even know existed. Danny did not explicitly state what these 'things' were; however, his world of addiction appears to have shut out certain emotions and Danny described his experience of lacking insight as everyone else around him seeing it but him being unable to see it:

> *"I didn't know, and that, it showed, Toby [therapist, name changed] picked it up almost instantly, I am sure the horse did, eh and you know, people around me picked it up. I didn't know that I had so much emotion" (19.691).*

Greg's experience of the horse as a mirror was less of a step-by-step process and rather cyclical in nature. His internal state was initially triggered in a similar fashion to Peter's due to fear of the horse's physical power and fear of being hurt by the horse. However, once Greg began to speak of his relaxed stated being mirrored in the horse it came across that the horse's internal state was also subsequently reflected in Greg:

> *"just the walking around with it to start with gives you something to concentrate on and when you stopped still…when they are relaxed it relaxes you and vice versa when you feel relaxed it relaxes them so now I think of it I suppose it did have a big part to play in it because she was so relaxed and I could hear all the others getting mad around me, she was so relaxed so it relaxed me." (6.256)*

This reflects the subordinate theme of the horses evoking calm internal states, this will be discussed shortly. Not only do the horses react to the participant but the participants reacts to the perceived internal state of the horse. Piers spoke of his experience of the whole group of participants mirroring the horse's internal state in a fluid and immediate process:

> *"…so the horse kind of calmed down a little bit we calmed down a little bit"* (15.660).

And he spoke of the horse mirroring the groups' internal states:

> *"… if we could regulate our breathing and sort of have it as a calm thing the horse then became calm as well."* (Piers, 16.652)

Piers used the same words to describe the level that both horse and participants calmed down ('little bit'). This suggests an even reduction in anxiety and a reciprocal mirroring of internal states that is not just similar, but experienced as precisely identical between the horse and the participants.

Clive talked about the horse's mirroring of his internal states in a slightly different style. He actively used his perception of this concept to work with the horse. He would prepare himself for working with the horse and hope to influence the horse with his internal state of being energised:

> *"So I stood there and it is just communicating as well. You know you don't have to talk, but you can think what you want to do and try and get the horse to think as well at the same time. So I was stood there, imagining myself, here we go take a deep breath, going to run, going to go straight into a jog...(8.273)...it was the energy, you have to have the energy to get the horse to do it, if you don't have the energy, then it won't do it (13.592)".*

By actively engaging the horse in mirroring his internal state – feeling energised, Clive was able to achieve his goals. Clive's description of trying to get the horse to mirror him had a telepathic sense to it. By thinking about what he wanted to do, he would try to get the horse to do the same simultaneously. Via this process, he appeared to increase his own awareness of his internal experience (*"imagining myself"*) in the moment, and by doing so, he tried to influence the horses behaviour and ultimately achieve his goal of being in control of the horse and it's behaviour.

EAP as a trigger

All participants reported their experience of EAP to have triggered them on either an emotional, cognitive or behavioural level. Two participants experienced all three

levels, four described being triggered on two levels: emotionally and behaviorally. Piers experienced both emotional and cognitive triggering. For example:

> *"You kind of went 'help me!' And you go 'oh I give up' you know but we didn't give up'.* (Piers, 9.393)

And:

> *"It was very frustrating and after we did that for ten minutes and didn't really get anywhere to be honest with you..."* (Piers, 2.55)

For some participants the triggering of cognitions, emotions or behaviours appeared to link to previous difficulties in relation to their addictions. It thus functioned as bringing to the forefront, problems that participants had encountered in the past and uncovered typical cognitions, behaviours and emotions that would cause the participant distress and potentially be serving to maintain their difficulties. For example, Jake experienced the trigger of long standing emotions and resulting behaviours that had been involved in maintaining his difficulties:

> *"I remember me feeling something, you know I am not feeling anything, I just felt empty sort of thing. I just didn't feel anything at all. I just felt empty myself but I would still go back to the disappointment of the feelings, that I carried around with me for a, 30 years sort of thing, or the behaviour I had carried around with me for thirty years'.(7.304)*

> *...and I could, it was things I was thinking about was coming out more and more I was flash backs to the situation in my life and thinking 'shit, yes there is another example of where I have done that, there is another example'" (8.311)*

Jake's description of being triggered referred to cognitions, emotions and behaviour. His experience of having 'flash backs' and the subsequent cognitions came as a surprise to Jake as it helped him to realize how many times in the past

that he had behaved in this particular manner. This suggests an increased insight for Jake into his difficulties by highlighting the number of times he had repeated the behaviour.

Later in the transcript, Jake described that in the past he had felt rejected by members of his family. He likened this to the rejection he perceived to be coming from one of the horses when it did not respond to his request. Most participants experienced being triggered and the resulting emotions related to past distress. Often these experiences were linked to the way the participants typically reacted to demanding, challenging or stressful situations. The process of being triggered therefore brought to the forefront the natural reactions each individual participant would have to a difficult situation and thus facilitated insight into their lives and difficulties outside of the therapeutic setting. The source of the trigger was the same (the horse) but the experience of this and the perceived meaning of the situation was individual to each participant thus tapping into their own unique cognitive processes, emotional responses and behavioural patterns.

Peter's experience of being triggered was slightly different. Despite initial anxiety in relation to being near the horse, he quickly gained confidence and described his time with the horse to be enjoyable. When he was challenged by a horse's behaviour, his internal skills and abilities were triggered. He drew on his determination to succeed and not wanting to give up:

> *"I am a bit like that aren't I. The will to succeed I want to try and, I don't like giving up really. You know it is like the course I am on now, I don't want to give up, I have felt like it but I don't want to, I want to go right to the end and see it through and that is exactly how I felt with the horse. I am here, ok you are being a bit stubborn but you are going to move in a minute, you know as much as you don't like it I am going to get you moving and try my best to get you around the field and you know, doing exactly what I am asking you to do. Eh, again this self satisfaction I have*

done it now, I have achieved it, so yeah, that sort of spurred me on a little bit"(5.208).

Therefore rather than triggering strong negative emotional reactions, as it did for others, Peter's internal strengths were activated and he used the experience to enhance this determination by reaching his goals with the horses and feeling the achievement at the end.

Experiencing calm internal states

In strong contrast to the initial triggering experiences of EAP, many participants reported a sense of calmness and relaxation at a later stage in the therapy. Most of these took place after the initial emotions of fear or frustration were experienced. Participants attributed their relaxed state to different aspects of the relationship they had developed with the horse. The common denominator for triggering a calm internal state was the processes by which the participants related to the horses. These processes served as facilitators to experiencing a calm internal state. To summarise, the processes by which participants individually related to the equines were experienced as the facilitating factors in triggering the feeling of being internally calm and relaxed:

Researcher: "At what point in the first session did you feel, hey this is kind of, we're bonding now?"

Clive: "More or less straight away really, as soon as I got the horse back and tied it up, I felt straight away, I started to, at first I was a bit on edge but quite quickly I just started to relax and as I was grooming the horse, I could feel myself go with it, go with the horse and relax with the horse and not

think about anything else. It was just the horse and me basically, it was a nice experience." (5.166)

Clive's description suggests being drawn into the relaxed experience with the horse. By being drawn into the horse's internal world he began to mirror what he perceived the horse to be feeling. This apparent joining with the horse's internal state facilitated a moment of isolation from the rest of his surroundings and suggests an experience of 'being' in the present moment, devoid of past or future struggles and anxieties. This is later reflected in Clive's description of a subsequent session:

"...there was no one, even though there was people there, it was just me and Marron [horse] just having fun really, running around and just us there, it was good, it was nice, that's why I enjoyed it you were away from everything, there was nothing else is there, there is nothing else that matters" (9.333)

As Clive described his experience of feeling alone with the horse, I realized one of my personal reasons for enjoying the presence of horses – escapism. Whenever I have needed time out to relax or get away from any struggles, the horses have always been my short-term answer. However, there remains a difference between the participant's escape and mine. My escape happens as I concentrate upon the physical training of my sports horse, hence it is a secondary benefit derived from the sport. My understanding of Clive's perception was that the horse facilitated the *opportunity* to momentarily escape from his difficulties. The feeling of escapism is similar but the road to getting there is different.

The realisation of this helped me to understand the differences between EAP and using equines as a sport. In addition, my reflections upon the similarities and differences benefited the IPA methodology that requires self-reflection and at the same time in-depth engagement with the interview text. The spontaneous empathy of understanding the escapism experienced by the participant encouraged the in-depth engagement with the data, whilst my separation of personal experiences and

participant experiences facilitated the transparency within the research that served to provide qualitative validity of the study.

Most other participants had similar experiences of feeling an internal state of calmness and relaxation when relating to the horses. One participant was however somewhat more ambivalent about his experience:

> *Researcher: "What do you think happened?"*
>
> *Greg: "I have no idea...I don't know it is just....it's like my consciousness when I was just standing there with my eyes shut meditating and I was...god knows, I was just standing there asleep almost and then I don't really know what happened and that's what freaks me out the most. (6.230)*

Greg had previously described a very physical experience of feeling literally physically attached to the horse:

> *"I said 'I feel like part of the horse and my arm is just attached to her' he said 'can you feel the whole the horse'" and I said 'no just the area that I am touching'. He said 'how about you?' and this sort of while I am just calm and I said no I have only got that arm. He said 'right now wiggle your fingers on your other arm' so I done that and this is all through my mind and the other arm appeared so now I have got two arms, no body, no head, no nothing" (Greg, 4.159)*

This process was described as taking place whilst he was feeling calm and relaxed. He described his relaxed state as 'asleep almost' but due to his experience being very powerful and unique in comparison to anything he had ever experienced (in general), he became fearful. The idea of being physically attached to the horse will be addressed in more detail later in the analysis section of 'being at one'; however, Greg's ambivalence about the experience is of relevance here.

During the moment of feeling attached to the horse, Greg experienced feeling calm and relaxed. It is on reflection of the experience that he begins to feel unsettled. This suggests that the process of being with the horse resulted in similar experiences to the other participants, that is, triggering a calm and relaxed internal state. However, due to the intensity of his experience the post-event reflection caused confusion and some distress. During the interview Greg spoke of the split between thinking with his head and thinking with his heart. Perhaps the experience of calmness when being with the horse, followed by fear when reflecting upon his experiences was an example of this process. He momentarily allowed himself to have an experience that was in touch with his emotions (whilst being with the horse); however, the intellectualising and rationalising of the experience afterwards was carried out with his head. This idea can be tentatively linked to Greg's use of the word 'consciousness', suggesting more than one consciousness – an emotional consciousness (experienced during EAP) and a cognitive consciousness in the form of intellectualising his experience.

3.3 Experiencing the external world

As well as providing an arena for unveiling aspects of the internal self, participants also described strong links between their EAP experiences and their external worlds (outside of therapy). Within this domain EAP work was seen as triggering memories and feelings of past experiences whilst offering an opportunity to relive and subsequently reflect upon these experiences.

Reflections of real life difficulties

The participants' external worlds were often relived during the therapeutic processes of EAP. The triggering of the internal self led to a cognitive link between the internal self and the client's external world. Participants were able to link their emotional experience to their subsequent behaviour and thus make explicit a causal relationship between their internal experiences and subsequent reactions. The specific content of the external world was individual to each client and was therefore linked to the other master theme of the 'participants' individual thematic experiences' within EAP therapy. That is, the link to the external world for each participant was unique to that of the client's specific difficulties.

For example, Greg's experience suggests a perceived lack of control over his actions and emotional processes. His experience of 'being taken home' when feeling bored with the therapeutic process was repeated in his description of boredom as the trigger that initiates the desire to gamble *"it just takes me to the betting shop"* (see quote below). As described, Greg's perceived lack of control over his addiction was reflected in his in-vivo experiences of being with the horse, thus his experience of EAP in that moment became a direct playing-out of his behaviour in his external world:

> *" ... when I was walking about with the horse to start with and it was the only one out of the three doing nothing, then I was feeling bored, so straight away I was just thinking something happened, which takes me back when I am at home and just need something to happen and when nothing does it just takes me to the betting shop where things are happening." (Greg, 13.580)*

Piers was less explicit about the content of the link to his external life:

'So it was interesting I think that particular exercise highlighted frustrations in life and looking at certain scenarios from a certain angle or certain way.' (2.73)

When interviewing Piers the researcher noted her own experience of Piers as unable to access his conscious awareness of his EAP experiences. This perception on the researcher's part may have influenced the depth of information gained due to not wishing to push the participant to disclose information beyond what he wished to. It is also possible that due to the potential vulnerability of the participants in general (inpatients) the researcher had her own fears of the possible negative consequences of causing emotional distress through probing too much during interviews.

In contrast to Piers, some participants were clear about the link between their EAP experiences and their external world. Jake was aware of how the therapeutic process linked him to his external world of when he was a child:

"I was having a couple of rough days anyway and because the horse was giving me the rejection I sort of, you know, "why I am doing this stuff?" and "they are obviously not playing" and you know, then I am not...that brought feelings of then, it also brought back the same again, feelings from childhood and when I was subservient..." (6.254)

Jake's wording when describing this experience, suggested to the researcher an image of the horse consciously and purposefully giving Jake an item that represented 'rejection'. This idea paints the horse as a creature with independent thoughts and consequent behaviours. By placing these qualities upon the horse, the therapeutic experience became more two-way and thus relational links to human interactions were formed.

This leads on to the next theme of using the relationship with the horses as a reflection of external human relationships experienced by the participants.

Relationship comparisons

The relationship dynamics between client and horse were seen to reflect actual external human relationships. This was, for some participants, a fluid process of the horse at times being given the role of the 'other' member of the relationship whilst at other times being perceived as a direct representation of the participants' own role in a particular relationship dynamic. Early on in his interview, Jake described his relationship with his wife:

> *"Well I was the controlling one and my wife was more you know, goes along with the flow sort of thing just recognised the problem that that causes because of the resentment...from my wife 'caus she is not in control with any of us and it causes resentment for me because I feel I am always having to make the decisions" (1.36)*

Jake's comment above described him as being the one wanting to control the relationship yet by doing so he felt resentful when he had to make decisions. This suggests a conflict within Jake of feeling the need to be in control yet struggling when he had to make decisions. Interestingly he chose to work with the horse he perceived to be the most controlling in the herd. At this time the horse was reflecting his own personality and thus worked as a representation of Jake's internal self.

> *"...on the first time, on the controlling time you know, I was looking for the reason I was there and why are we doing this? When I picked the big horse, I knew why I had picked the big horse and thought well that is because I want to be in control here, oh yeah, here it comes, you have to be in control or you got to be in charge. You know, but that is kind of the things in my life are like that." (6.233)*

However, as mentioned previously, at another point in the interview the horse is given the very different role of being the 'rejector' who represents Jake's memory of his family rejecting him:

> *"...basically I was having a, I was having a couple of rough days anyway and because the horse was giving me the rejection..." (6.255)*

Similar to Jake's latter use of the horse as a representation of an external relationship, Simon at times experienced the horses' behaviours as resembling his human-to-human relationships.

Throughout Simon's interview he referred to difficulties he had previously encountered when communicating with other people. His spoke of his fear of not being listened to and not being relaxed around other people. When describing his experience of trying to work with a horse that would not respond to him it appears that his perception of the horse's reaction was similar to the typical reaction he would expect from a human. Simon even gave the horse a voice:

> *"...then he was not having it and then he was just nodding his head away and was swooshing his tail as in 'look I am not interested, get away from me' and it kept trying and to walk off, I thought I would walk with it and say 'look calm down' trying to put it on again and it walked the other way and just walking away from me. I was then getting more and more angry and thought 'what the f's he doing?'." (5.171)*

The process of exploring their relationship with the horses allowed participants to move between seeing themselves in a relationship where the horse represented the other partner (as described above) and 'stepping back' to see themselves, through the process of projecting themselves onto another living creature (the horse). This facilitated further reflection, insight and an opportunity to explore alternative behaviours:

"Just so chuffed on top of the world really, that I had done a horse and a big powerful animal like that could be so relaxed well if the horse can relax then I can go into the big wide world and relax with other people and communicate better and it did and I got better all the time I have been in here, to communicate with people and not just run and hide..." Simon (3.118)

Some participants used their reflective learning to practice new found alternatives in-vivo as a form of an experimental exposure experience. This offered increased confidence for many participants and some gained a stronger internal locus of control:

"I know if I'm feeling a bit down, I've got to energise myself to get myself up, I mean that's what I've understood from this [EAP], is that, if I'm feeling down and other people aren't going to respond to you, it's only me who can get them to do that. So that's what I took out of the whole three sessions, if I'm positive and in a good mood, then you can probably accomplish anything, you are getting to do anything." Clive (9.348)

And,

"And it is how to deal with each individual and I suppose if you put it to the horses, each horse is an individual so each horse needs a different lead to get it to do something, put that towards your staff it works a treat". (Danny, 17.653)

And:

"When I was just cleaning it and it was, I was talking to it, I was communicating with it. Alright, that has been my problem in life, not communicating with people and just putting my, as I say my shield up and running and hiding under my addiction. I have learnt that in here, to put it down and just relax and

communicate more and that is what I did I practiced on the horse really and I could see me and I could see the horse had listened to me, ... this so relaxes the horse and I wish all people who I speak to could relax and listen to me and whatever, and it was, yeah it was a good, I felt good." (Simon, 3.91)

When listening to the participants speaking about their relationship comparisons to the horses, I began to reflect upon one of the differences between my personal relationship with my horses and the participants' relationship with the therapeutic horses. I see my horses as individual characters, much as people have individual personalities. However, I do not compare them to other people in my life, they are separate entities. This reflection of differences between EAP and horses being used for sport, helped me to understand the vast contrast between the two uses of the same animal.

Through this process I became able to 'step back' from my own experiences of horses and see the EAP experiences through a different lens – that of the participants. This contrast in perception of the horse itself was extremely helpful in my engagement with the transcripts and facilitated a potentially better double hermeneutic process of the researcher trying to engage and interpret the participants' perceptions and interpretation of their EAP experiences.

3.4 Forming a relationship

There was a consensus about the necessity to form relationships with the horses. The process of relating to the horses was carried out via verbal, physical, and emotional expressions. The motivational drive for the participants to bond with the horses varied and there was a range of descriptions of how the relationships were formed. However, the spontaneous nature with which the participants started to connect with the horses was common between all interviewees.

Communication

On a descriptive level, it is worth noting that the use of verbal language during EAP work was common between participants. For some verbal expressions were used to reduce participants' own anxieties as well as try to influence the horses' behaviour:

> *"I just found myself talking to her a lot, which put me at ease and I think it put the horse at ease." (Clive, 3.66)*

And:

> *"He was really good, eh, once he started walking around I actually started talking to his, strange as it sounds but, started talking to him and started saying, look come on you know, you are making me look a bit of a fool here, just ...and then again I started brushing him and eh, starting talking to him about some of my problems eh, and said, look you know, please just do this for me. And...HE DID!" (Peter, 3.147)*

By influencing the horses and trying to keep them calm the threat they presented to participants was reduced and verbal expressions therefore functioned as a process that provided a sense of control for the participants. This reduced anxiety level and increased the clients' ability to engage with the horses.

For Simon communication was used to practice an important skill that was relevant to the client's difficulties:

> *"I think it is just learning how to deal with different things..."* Simon (8.305)
> *"...I think 'communication', that is the main thing since I have been in here, trying to communicate, even with animals."* Simon (8.310)

In contrast, Piers saw EAP as an opportunity to reduce his verbal communication and become more aware of his non-verbal. This will be discussed in further detail in his section within the analysis titled 'accessing the emotional self'.

Forming a connection

The forming of relationships was conceptualised via both physical and emotional connections. Some participants found it hard to express the nature of this process and used the words 'bond' and 'connection' repeatedly throughout their interviews, apparently struggling to deepen their understanding of what had happened:

> *'I think because of their...not docile but maybe sort of collusive you know what I mean because they are kind of just there and because of the fact of their size again. When you do get that connection with the horse and you get it to do something it usually happens and when you click with it and it does happen.'* (Piers, 12.525)

The above quotation demonstrates Piers' confusion about how the connection was formed. Piers' attempt to describe the connection was related to his perception of the horse's internal qualities (collusive) and its' physical appearance (size). How these aspects of the horse served to develop a connection was not clear but Pier's description of 'clicking' with the horse provides an image (for the researcher) of a mechanical process by which one action by Piers affects the horse's response. This process seems to result in a 'fit' or 'clicking' into place between horse and participant, thus a connection is formed between the two.

Others described their way of forming a relationship on a physical level:

> *"I don't know it's strange, eh, just trying to think back, it is as if there is some sort of wave going from, through the horse to you or visa versa. You know it's....and you are sort of connecting with the horse. It is really odd...eh, I don't know, it's difficult to describe but that is the only way I can describe it, some sort of energy is coming from you or the horse and you are both responding to it and you are both starting to feel relaxed and*

after that the horse was responding to everything I wanted it to do" (Peter, 3.115)

This suggests a process of reciprocity between horse and client. The connection being formed between the two was perceived to not be one way but rather one part of the relationship responding to the other. The experience of being responded to was perceived as rewarding and ultimately led to a sense of partnership and confidence:

"... I took over the lady horse, it's a grey horse, and I cleaned that and I got attached to that and I felt confident and I was talking to her and just felt like it was like a big baby, melted in my hand, and just talking to her and I felt this horse is listening to me 'caus when I turned away it nudged me and I thought oh he wants me to keep cleaning it, it was just so relaxed and it cocked its leg up like it was going to sleep at one stage..." (Simon, 2.63)

Others experienced the process of forming a connection as a necessity in order to achieve the sense of control that was gained when the horse responded to them:

"... so you couldn't just go and boss it around you have to sort of form a bond and then sort of take a bit of control..." (Jake, 6.246)

The above examples show the participants' sense of achievement by forming a connection and feeling responded to. In contrast to this, one participant described a moment of connection as an event that he did not try to create. He appeared to participate through no conscious choice of his own but through an automatic process.

"...then when I reached one of the corners with her and standing there and just had one of the strangest experiences of my life with her. Just standing there and Toby [therapist, changed name] came over and talked me through it.... "what do you feel" and I said I feel like part of the horse and my arm is just attached

to her he said "can you feel the whole the horse?" and I said no just the area that I am touching..." Greg (4.156)

As previously suggested Greg appeared to have an external locus of control and his experience of connecting with the horse was perceived to be controlled by an external force rather than an active attempt by Greg to connect with the horse. This difference in the client experiences suggests that EAP work can help to highlight common behavioural, cognitive and emotional patterns specific to each individual client and his difficulties.

Reciprocal processes of relating

Throughout the interviews, there were descriptions of reciprocal processes of relating between the participants and the horses. In relation to these processes some participants spoke of their awareness of the horses' internal processes. For these participants, part of the process of forming a relationship was having the perceived understanding of what the horse was experiencing. This was often reflected in the participants' suggesting that the horse was feeling the same as they were:

"We just seemed to connect. Just seemed to do what I wanted him to do. Whereas before he was maybe a bit, probably felt the same way as what I felt a bit anxious, a bit worried and scared and eh, which is why he probably didn't want to walk around much but you know, he just seemed like, as soon as I told him my problems he was good as gold ." (Peter, 4.192)

The perceived understanding of the horses internal processes was also expressed as the horse responding to the participants' needs at a particular point during the therapy,:

"Well I thought of it [EAP] like a practice, it could have been because I know they are not talking back to me but I could sense it was listening, and before I wouldn't even try to communicate with anybody, I just think ' oh they won't listen'" (Simon, 4.125)

By using the perceived understanding of the horses' internal experiences and needs the clients were able to justify their experience and perhaps make more sense of their individual experiences. Often in the transcripts the participants mentioned feeling silly or embarrassed. It may be that these explanations were put in place so that they felt less embarrassed talking to the researcher about the topic:

"And the horse, you can see, you can actually feel, that because they want to be dominated. You know they want to be, ok the big horse was the dominant horse and doesn't want to be embarrassed but they also want to be led and dominated slightly themselves you know if you show that you are fearful then they will not do what you want them to do they will just stand there and not move." (Jake, 4.158)

As previously mentioned, Jake had difficulties in his marriage due to his need to control situations whilst in contrast resenting his wife for not making any decisions. By describing the horses' internal experiences and needs he appeared to be describing his own needs thus potentially justifying and making sense of his own relationship needs. This suggests a reciprocal process of relating, the horse was perceived to have his needs met and Jake was able to indirectly express his own needs via his perception of the horse.

Danny explained the reciprocal relating between horses and participants in their parting moment. Much like Jake, the needs of the participant seems to be reflected in the reciprocal need of the horses (i.e., not wanting the participants to leave):

"But it was nice because in the end the horses came over, almost as if they didn't want us to leave and we messed about giving them hay and things and they were looking, until we left. So

again it was quite a sense of, I don't know, what is the word I am looking for, yeah you felt quite upset when you lef." (Danny, 23.869)

Greg was able to explicitly state his desire to be liked by the horse and appeared to sum up the desire of many of the participants, that is, to be liked by the horse and be able to control it:

'I really wanted to be with the horse and I really enjoyed that, I wanted it to like me. It was just us realising that the horse wants to like you as well and be sort of firm with it so it will do what you want it to do and that is what I got out of it really.' Greg (2.75)

Piers on the other hand spoke of expressing his feelings to the horse and the horse reacting in response to the feelings conveyed to it:

' I think it was definitely a case of trying to give across one's feelings to the horse and have that react back to you if that makes sense.' (4.174)

This is slightly different to other participants' experiences, as it appears to suggest less desire to have control over the outcome of the reciprocal act. Piers did not state a desire for the horse to like him rather his experience of letting the horse react naturally seemed more appropriate for Piers. This perception of the reciprocal relationship relates to Piers individual thematic experience (accessing the emotional self) which will be described later. Piers spoke of 'being', that is, not acting or behaving in an incongruent manner to his emotions or cognitions, simply being himself. This is how he perceived the horse to be. The concept of 'being' was therefore a reflection of his own needs and was supported by later quotes when Piers notes his lack of ability to 'feel' and it being something he would like to work on.

This idiographic perception serves to highlight the importance of noting the way that subtle nuances within themes can reflect participants' own take on the same

experience. It highlights the importance of attending to each participant's understanding of his experience when executing EAP work.

Being at one

Some participants described the time they spent with the horses with a sense of isolation from the rest of their surroundings. This was experienced in a positive light and as being a calming and pleasant experience. It suggested an emotional intimacy within the relationship that was unique to each participant.

Clive put it quite simply:

> *"...relax with the horse and not think about anything else. It was just the horse and me basically, it was a nice experience."* (Clive, 5.161)

Clive's feeling of being with the horse also suggested a relief from cognitive distress. He was able to just 'be' in the moment. Danny also spoke of a reduction of worries whilst being with the horse:

> *"...and that paranoia slips away very quickly because you know you are not being judged, it is only you and the horse, all be it, I know you have got people around you, eh, it's you and the horse* (14.580)

Danny went on to explain in more detail how his experience of forming a relationship with the horse and spending time with it had a positive impact upon him:

> *"But being with the horse, you didn't feel any of that, you were not being judged, the horse doesn't know what you are, the horse doesn't know you have an addiction, the horse doesn't know why you are there, the horse is glad you are there. You*

know, and you are interacting with them and that is very nice, all be it, it gives you something back, that when you walk away you're, you don't feel as paranoid, you know that you are just another person, but you know you are you." Danny (14.585)

By perceiving the horse as non-judgemental and naïve to his addiction Danny was able to momentarily experience himself without his addiction difficulties. In addition, by feeling separate from the rest of his surroundings and away from his personal difficulties he became 'just another person'. This suggests that Danny previously did not feel like other people and thus different from others, potentially because of his addiction difficulties.

Reflected in the last five words of the above quote was Danny's experience of the 'real' Danny surfacing. So, whilst being like other people, he was able to keep his identity, but without the attached addiction tag.

Simon's experience of being at one with the horse was described in a very different way. His use of words when describing his relating to the horse suggested a physical merging with the horse:

"I was talking to her and just felt like it was like a big baby, melted in my hand" (2.65)

It also suggested a sense of being able to mould and thus control the horse:

"...it was the grey horse and yes that was just like putty in my hands again, there talking to her, being there and yeah felt good" (Simon, 5.188)

Simon described a moment where he went to check on a colleague. There was a sense of pride and control as Simon moved around with the horse with apparent ease:

"I could see him upset and I just walked up to him with the horse and it followed me. And I said 'you alright' and something came

to him and he didn't want to speak to anybody but just glad I went up to him and said, 'you ok?' it was like taking a little dog for a walk, and this powerful animal is coming with me. And it was just, hmm, look at me I have got this beautiful animal, a tonne of weight and 'come on' off we went it was good, I just felt connected to it." (Simon, 5.191)

In contrast to Danny's experience of seeing the real self, for Simon the experience of being part of a unit with the horse was about being able to control the horse and the sense of achievement and potential power that it left him feeling. His mention of the weight of the horse emphasises the importance of the strength or size of the animal that he was able to control. By feeling in control of the horse he became more confident and was able to do what he described as his lifelong problem: to communicate with people. Somehow the perceived control or joining with the horse gave Simon the confidence to not behave as he normally would:

"...not communication with people, and just putting my, as I say, my shield up and running and hiding under my addiction." (Danny, 3.93)

Therefore, perhaps like Simon, Danny's experience allowed him to be momentarily free of his addiction.

3.5 Therapeutic change.

The master theme of 'Therapeutic Change' encompasses the various changes made by participants as a consequence of their experiences of EAP. Of course due to the adjunct nature of EAP some of these changes could be partly due to other therapeutic interventions experienced whilst being an inpatient at the addiction clinic. The author of the present study has tried to mainly utilise quotes that link the

therapeutic changes to the EAP experience; however, due to the rich nature of the participants' overall therapeutic experience during their three weeks in the clinic, it is impossible to concretely separate the EAP-induced changes and other factors that have encouraged changes to occur.

As a general note, all participants repeatedly described their experience positively. Despite some initial anxieties and frustrations, descriptions such as 'good experience', 'felt nice' and 'really enjoyed it' were common across all transcripts. Despite the limited richness and descriptive quality in these words the frequency with which they were used was note worthy particularly due to the otherwise rather diverse and mixed nature of many of the subordinate themes. The frequency factor suggests a keenness on the participants' part to let the researcher know that their EAP experience was positive. It is also possible that the use of these basic phrases was in place of more complex explanations of their experiences. Due to the novelty of working with horses, access to more descriptive phrases that could capture the nature of the EAP experience may have been a challenge. It is also possible that the participants' felt a desire to be positive about the experience in an effort to please the researcher and be helpful.

The group of sub themes under the 'therapeutic change' heading all relate to the participants making changes, talking about making changes or offering opportunities for therapeutic changes. The first four themes of 'cognitive flexibility', 'increased insight', 'sense of achievement' and 'increased self confidence' are all directly related to the participants descriptions of what they experienced during their EAP sessions. The last theme under this heading is 'utilising visually descriptive language'. This sub theme may seem less obviously related to therapeutic change however its location within the analysis will become clearer in the discussion section. It will be argued that the potential therapeutic value of the figures of speech that the participants' utilized to understand and describe their experiences is vast. The theme is therefore placed under the super ordinate theme of 'therapeutic change' due to its potential to *offer* change rather than its direct therapeutic effect upon the participants during their EAP sessions.

Cognitive flexibility

The process of becoming more cognitively flexible was reflected in the participants' description of discovering alternative options in their lives:

> *"Yeah looking at the horse thing in general it highlighted for me how I felt or feel about certain situations and giving me a chance to look at them in a different direction or different light."* (Piers 9.405)

Often these changes were related to specific difficulties experienced outside of the therapeutic setting.

For example, Simon related his initial behaviour towards a horse to his typical reaction to people in the outside world. He had become cross and frustrated. Following further EAP work Simon began to view his situation with the horse differently and became able to see alternative reasons for the horse's reaction (i.e., not personal to him) and this facilitated a link to the outside world of how he could begin to see a similar situation in a different light:

> *"...that is what I got out of that little session, like people who have got things on their mind, could have lost their job that day, and I could have come to them for a promotion and try to speak to them and them going 'well...' and instead of saying anything back to them just say 'all right you don't want to speak to me I'll speak to you when you want to speak to me.' And that is what I learnt at that session. It was good".* (Simon, 4.154)

Also:

> *"So instead of thinking 'oh, fuck, piss off then' or whatever, put my shield up again and then off to the pub or the bookies, say 'ok, those people don't want to speak to me and don't want to open up to me and tell me what is wrong'" (Simon, 7.250)*

In the above quote, Simon's cognitive changes suggested an ability to effect his addictive behaviours. By changing his thoughts and resulting reactions to other people's behaviour an opportunity was created to stop the triggering of his addictive behaviours.

Greg's cognitive changes were also related to relationship difficulties:

> *"So I can take definitely that aspect and maybe don't know other things like trying so hard to get the horse to like you and maybe I do that in everyday life as you always worry about what people think, and although it is vital with the horse because you need the horse to have positive thoughts with you it maybe not so necessary in the outside world. You don't need everyone to like you and you don't have to make everyone like you."* (Greg, 13.587)

Through the above quote, Greg showed a less rigid rule than previously present around his relationships. He used his contrasting belief in relation to the horse (having to make it like him) as a learning platform for becoming more flexible in his own beliefs around human relationships.

Clive's change in his cognitive flexibility was broader in its application. He noted that he had realised that he had a choice in life and an ability to influence his future:

> *"I think it has been a very important experience to me, it has shown me that, I think what I've taken from it, you don't have to be where I've been, you can be somewhere else if you let yourself be somewhere else, if you open yourself and you let something else in there..."* (17.616)

By becoming more cognitively flexible and allowing 'something else in', Clive's restrictive world of addiction was no longer the only option available in his future.

The cognitive changes experienced by the participants were achieved through the way EAP facilitated an insight into both the internal and external worlds of the participants'.

Increased insight

Participants reported an increased insight into their personal difficulties following EAP work. This was mainly reflected in an awareness of their previous behavioural and cognitive patterns.

> *"...'woo Simon, just step back and think what you are doing'. There must be a reason for it. Instead of shouting or whatever and that is what I probably do before when I was without, even before I came in here I'd just get mad and get angry and again then I go into my own little world." (Simon, 4.153)*

And:

> *"And just yeah the one last week highlighted the rejection part of you know, how you try hard not to be rejected but then if you are then you just go to the other extreme." (Jake 10.411)*

And:

> *'It was nice to sit down and sort of talk about the points of the exercises and how we felt and reacted to those. I think we you had a chance to take a step back from it, it was interesting.'*
> (Piers, 9.379**).**

Insight for some included the awareness of a desired way of being. Rather than purely seeing the behaviour that was unhelpful, for some participants the

experience took them a step further by providing an opportunity to see an alternative and more desired type of behaviour:

> *"...you think, well, this has actually helped, you know, and you don't realise it bang on, straight away it is something that sort of develops after a few hours, and maybe a little bit longer, but it is certainly sticks in your mind that this is what you should be like, and for me it was, at work I know that I suppose I have lost some of my assertiveness."* (Danny, 16.589)

And:

> *"...the whole program is to get you to open up and express your feelings and to make you stop and think and rather than just sort of giving up and 'oh there is no point sod that, I can't be bothered to do that' and like moving the horse, before I would have gone, 'nah, sod the horse' it's perseverance I think, I am going to carry on, it is a bit like that in our therapy sessions." (Peter, 9.428)*

And:

> *"...that's what I've understood from this, is that, if I'm feeling down and other people aren't going to respond to you, it's only me who can get them to do that. So that's what I took out of the whole three sessions, if I'm positive and in a good mood, then you can probably accomplish anything, you are getting to do anything." (Clive, 10.357)*

Clive's expression of insight showed an optimistic view of his future. His ability to influence others became apparent and suggested an increased internal locus of control. In addition, the power of his ability to control his cognitions was described with a perception of being able to achieve anything, almost to the point of no limit.

In contrast, Greg's insight offered him a choice of alternative behaviour whilst leaving him with a sense of ambivalence about his options. The internal split between emotions and cognitions was initially seen as a difficulty, however as he continued his interview, his reflection suggested a desire to remain as he was:

> *"So that sort of made me think that is what I haven't got and that is what I wanted to get but the more I thought about it, I am not sure I do want that I am quite happy in some respects as my head doesn't listen always to my body."* (7.307)

Whilst being interviewed, it could be presumed that Greg was using the intellectual part of his self (the head part). If that was the case then his expression of not wanting to merge his head (rational self) and body (emotional self) could be an expression of his internal fear of actually feeling emotion. This is supported by the fearful and confused reaction Greg experienced after his experience of bonding with the horse. For Greg, the insight facilitated awareness but it did not provide such strong conviction to make changes as it did for other participants.

Sense of achievement

Most participants reported their experiences to involve a sense of achievement. This was often directly related to their increased ability to manage and control the horse. Many participants described their initial fear of the horses. The fear was expressed with words describing the horses as 'powerful', 'strong' and 'big'. The perceived threat that the presence of the horses provided became an important factor in the sense of achievement. By feeling connected, and in control of a horse which has such a threatening meaning attached to it, the achievement of each participant appeared all the more powerful:

"I felt really connected to the horse. Really did and I was trot...I went, I was full of, eh, what is the word I am looking for? Just so chuffed on top of the world really, that I had done a horse and a big powerful animal like that could be so relaxed." (Simon, 3.116)

And:

' I think initially it is a daunting task and I think as soon as you realise it is not impossible and it is not a daunting task you kind of feel a better sense of achievement.' Piers (11.499)

For Greg the speed with which he was able to improve seemed important:

"The first week the horse that I had made a noise and I jumped out my skin and twenty minutes later it done the same thing and I didn't even flinch and I thought in twenty minutes I have come this far and in another twenty minutes you are grooming the horse and then twenty minutes later you are walking it around and then twenty minutes later you are jumping over something with it. " (12.549)

Greg experienced a fast process of gaining achievements whilst working with the horse and, like Peter, was encouraged by his initial achievements:

"Eh, again this self satisfaction I have done it now, I have achieved it, so yeah, that sort of spurred me on a little bit." (Peter, 5.216)

Some participants appeared surprised at their achievements:

"Eh, I turned around, tried again and within, I don't know, it must have been 30 seconds or a minute, the horse was moving and for me personally, it was an absolute shock, elation, couldn't believe I had done it". (Danny, 2.66)

Danny's achievement came as a surprise to him and by managing to move the horse alone, he experienced the horse as doing something purely for him. Again, the value of this appears to be partly rooted in the perceived power and strength of the horse. It was not possible to physically make the horse move so the achievement potentially reflected back to the participants something about themselves. For Danny this could be a sense of self worth as the horse was perceived to chose to respond to him 'personally'. This was later reiterated in Danny's comment about having lost a lot of his self esteem due to his addiction, but the experience of working with the horse provided positive feedback in response to his behaviour:

> *"It was just so nice to be positive and think, have something positive happen as a reaction to me."* (Danny, 4.122)

Increased self confidence

The previous theme referred to how participants experienced a sense of achievement through working and being with the horses. The participants' experience of this led to an increased confidence. For some the confidence related purely to handling the horses with increased confidence:

> *"From being scared of the horse and not knowing to really what to do with it at the start of the session. By the end of it I had it running and jumping whilst I was leading it and it did give me the confidence to go on for the next session really."* (Greg, 2.63)

But for others their increased confidence also generalised to their abilities outside of the therapeutic setting. Again, like other themes in the analysis, each individual placed their own achievement within a personal context of relevance:

> *"...if the horse can relax then I can go into the big wide world and relax with other people and communicate better and it did and I*

got better all the time I have been in here, to communicate with people and not just run and hide..". (Simon, 3.120)

And:

"All right I was very good at it before I ended up being an addict, eh, now when I go back, hopefully my old self will come back with a new self-confidence a new me, a new assertiveness which I didn't have, but you can always equate what we did with the horses to outside life". (Danny, 16.602)

Danny's increased confidence went beyond an improved belief about himself. It became more of an internal construction of a new and improved self. His initial comment suggests a return to how he used to be ('old me') however he goes on to suggest the development of a 'new me'. Thereby Danny was not only returning to what he was before but had added new aspects to his self by being more assertive and confident. This idea suggests the participant's view of his 'self' as changing and improving as a result of his therapeutic experience.

Utilising visually descriptive language.

Throughout the interviews, participants used metaphors, similes and other linguistic representations to describe their experiences of EAP. Although, as noted earlier, the use of this type of visually descriptive language was not directly utilised by all participants to facilitate therapeutic change, the subtheme has been located under the super-ordinate heading of 'Therapeutic change' due to its potential therapeutic value in facilitating change.

The subordinate theme of 'utilising visually descriptive language' overarches a concept that is present in all the participant interviews. It reflects a theme of

process rather than content. That is, the process of how the participants described their experiences rather than the content of what they were describing. Due to the overarching nature of the sub theme, many examples of the visually descriptive language have already been used throughout the analysis. For example *"like putty in my hands"* (Simon, 5.188), *"putting…my shield up and running and hiding under my addiction."* (Danny, 3.93) and *"my head doesn't listen always to my body."* (Greg,7.311). Examples that have not already been quoted will therefore be the focus of the present section. For a full list of thematically relevant quote locations, refer to Table 1.

Clive used visually descriptive language to express his experience of being with the horses:

> *'...so I liked to talk to the horses, it was like having a doctor to an extent'* (Clive, 2.49)

The idea of having a doctor was not explored further during the interview however the potential qualities of a doctor could be interpreted (by the researcher)as those of healing, listening, curing, wisdom and knowledge. Clive's perception of a doctor is not know but his individual thematic experience (as will be presented shortly) relates to a positive experience of learning more about himself and accessing the 'true self'. The perceived doctor-like qualities of the horses could therefore be understood as reflecting those stated above and thus have facilitated his experience of accessing his true self.

Piers and Peter both used descriptive representations of their therapeutic changes that referred to movement:

> *'It was nice to sit down and sort of talk about the points of the exercises and how we felt and reacted to those. I think you had a chance to take a step back from it'* (Piers, 9.379)

And:

> *'...but didn't even think 'right I want a drink', which is good, you know I feel like I am moving in the right direction.* (Peter, 9.414)

The process of making changes was perceived as a physical movement from the previous ways of being. Piers was able to use the therapeutic approach to cognitively move away from his experiences with the horses and view them, not from *within* the experience, but from the outside looking in. This offered greater insight and created potential opportunities for therapeutic change.

Peter's description of not experiencing cravings for drink was understood as heading in the 'right direction' possibly to reach a target goal. It suggests that there is a 'wrong direction' to go and perhaps Peter has previously felt he was heading that way instead. Thus by taking steps in the right direction Peter describes a desired internal change.

In contrast to describing positive changes, Greg and Danny used their visually descriptive language to express the severity of the challenges they experienced. Greg offered a very visual representation of how he felt it had affected him:

> *"...it has just blown my mind really"* (Greg, 8.337)

Greg's typical behaviour of separating his head (logical thinking) and heart (emotional feelings), as explained in the super-ordinate theme of 'Participants' individual thematic experiences', was challenged in his EAP experience. This is reflected in the above quote. By accessing his emotions Greg experienced a new and novel way of being. It seems that he would normally avoid accessing his emotions as a way of protecting himself however, when emotions were triggered by the EAP experience Greg's mind is 'shattered' as his internal rules of always remaining logical and emotionally detached are no longer being followed. The quote shows Greg's perception of his mind being destroyed or fragmented in response to his experience of allowing emotions to be acknowledged.

Danny's description of his first EAP session suggests a feeling of being challenged and fearful:

> *'...and you are chucked right in at the deep end and a bloody great big horse that you are not really used to* (Danny, 4.147)

The use of 'you' rather than 'I' in the above quote suggests that Danny did not see his experience as isolated to his own experience of EAP. His perception of EAP was therefore that all participants felt equally 'at sea'. The size of the horse and the discomfort of trying something new (being with a horse) adds to his anxieties.

Jake's description was much more specific to his personal experiences:

> *'...and I remember me feeling something, you know I am not feeling anything, I just felt empty sort of thing. I just didn't feel anything at all. I just felt empty myself.'* (Jake, 7.304)

Jake immediately contradicts himself by saying he felt 'something' and then 'not anything'. Later in the paragraph Jake talks about feeling disappointed in himself with the way he felt and behaved in the past. Perhaps by being empty Jake was able to avoid such feelings. The use of the word 'empty' suggests a person devoid of emotions and perhaps this is what Jake was aiming for.

There is a sense of confusion about his experience and the repetitive nature of the sentence suggests Jake was struggling to make sense of the experience himself. The use of both the present and past tense in the sentence reflects this confusion and Jake seemed to be partly reliving his experience of feeling empty as he was describing it. This conflict may be representing the conflict of wanting to access emotions but feeling more comfortable if he is indeed 'empty'.

It is possible that further exploration of what meanings the images described above hold for each participant, could serve to facilitate an exploration that might trigger therapeutic change. Participants did not explicitly describe the use of descriptive language as a way of making sense of their experience, however, the frequency of these expressions reflects a common ground between the participants' experiences.

It may be that the novelty of the therapeutic intervention triggers such figures of speech as the day-to-day language used by the participants does not seem to quite capture the essence and intensity of the experience.

3.6 Participants individual thematic experiences

In addition to the thematic commonalities described above in previous themes, each participant had their own personal theme that ran throughout the interview. This became apparent as participants were talking about their experiences and repeatedly referred back to their own specific topics. Clearly some of these topics have been covered in detail in the above analysis; however, the idiographic nature of each client's experience is noteworthy and therefore a summary of each is provided next.

It appears that the participants' individual thematic experiences related to; for example, family, relationships, experiences, personal history and related cognitive beliefs. These were brought into the EAP 'arena' and utilised to make sense of each participant's individual EAP experiences. Not only were the participants' using EAP as a vehicle for understanding themselves, it seems they were also using 'themselves' as a vehicle for understanding the processes at work during EAP. Thus it seems that there was a strong relational dynamic between EAP and the personal history each participant brought to the EAP sessions - one informing the other.

Jake –control and rejection

Jake's experience of EAP bore strong links to both his childhood experiences and his adult behaviour linked to wanting to be in control and fearing rejection. As described above his relationships both past and present were filled with conflict and difficulties and the perceived causes were mainly linked to control and rejection.

Whilst spending time with the horse Jake appeared to experience a form of restorative experience in relation to the latter topic. He described spending time with the horse and his perception of what happened was a strong contrast to feeling rejected:

> *"And I just thought it was quite nice to have such a big huge animal and you know, I had my hand around its neck and just started talking to it myself and you know almost cuddling it and it was almost cuddling me back." (4.136)*

Jakes perception was that the horse was reciprocating his emotional expressions. When asked about how he understood this experience he went on to explain:

> *"I just smiled, you know, made me laugh. Makes you feel kind of wanted you know, because you don't know the horse very well and she [equine specialist] knows the horse and she tried to get the horse to do something and the horse just went [signals two fingers up] off you go and turned a bit towards me, I don't know if it is her horse or she is just a guest there but she is a horsy person and the horse was kind of looking for my needs and where I was because we had formed some sort of bond." (4.142)*

Via this experience Jake was given the role of the person who was being accepted and the female (equine specialist) was being rejected. As stated, he felt wanted by the horse and explicitly stated that the horse was specifically looking to meet his

needs. Jake's experience allowed him to, not only avoid rejection, but also to feel needed. Jake's needs appear to have been met via this process and the whole experience was perceived as comforting:

> *"...but I would definitely say it is worth-while and therapeutic in a way that it is quite, it's just nice, it's quite calming you know. It's like getting a big cuddle I suppose."* Jake (6.227).

Jake's need for control in his marriage has already been discussed previously. The theme ran though out his interview and was reflected in his desire to be in control of the horses. By controlling the horse, that he perceived to be the most controlling one of the whole herd, he was able to gain maximum control and guarantee an ability to control all the horses:

> *"Yeah, it was happening, me and the horse you know, by choosing the controlling horse and doing that , you know if I can conquer this one I can conquer them all and you want to be in control of it just highlighted that."* (10.404)

For Jake his internal conflicts were directly played out with the horses. Both positive and negative aspects were linked to the horses. It seems that the horses were used as 'blank canvases' to project necessary (to Jake) themes upon.

Simon –meeting emotional needs.

Simon described his main theme during EAP as being 'communication'. He was able to identify his fear of other people if they tried to communicate with him:

> *"...putting my shield up and running and hiding under my addiction"* (3.94)

The experience of being with the horse led Simon to have a perceived experience of being heard – something he presumably avoided when being with other people.

The idea of avoidance of communication suggested to the researcher that Simon's fear of people not listening to him was so great that he avoided communication in general as a means of staying in control and avoiding the feared experience of not being listened to in the first place.

The horse's role in Simon's EAP sessions was to offer Simon the opportunity to experiment with communicating but in a safer setting. For example:

> *"I have learnt that in here, to put it [the metaphorical addiction shield] down and just relax and communicate more and that is what I did I practiced on the horse really..." (3.94)*

Simon was then able to project his internal needs upon the horse:

> *"...I could see me and I could see the horse had listened to me, listening and well his ears were pricked and I felt good. I mean I know he can't answer me I was just telling him how good it was and how wonderful what a day it was..."(*3.97)

In the above quote Simon demonstrated his needs of being listened to, being met by the horse. He recognised that the horse lacked ability to respond verbally however, there seemed to be no recognition of the horse not being able to listen to Simon's words. It may be that the horse's lack of verbal response was helpful to Simon as he could place his own perceptions directly onto the horse. The relationship between horse and participant was on the surface one sided (man talking to horse) however by placing the emotionally needed response upon the horse the communication became two way whilst remaining completely within the control of the participant.

This idea was later reflected in Simon's comments about the horse's response to him:

> *"I was just getting vibes back for me"* (3.102)

Simon experienced his communication with the horse as unique in that the horse's response was exclusive to him and solely a pleasant experience. Perhaps this is what Simon lacked the most in his life – non-judgemental communication that resulted in a positive experience. In this way, much like Jake, Simon's perception of communicating with the horse was a potentially emotionally restorative experience.

Towards the end of Simon's interview he spoke of his view of leaving the therapy setting and communicating with other people:

> *"I think it is just learning how to deal with different things. When I go into the public, it is like they are animals, they can't answer you back, they can do actions and be quite set in their way or whatever, and that is what I have learnt, they are only animals..."* (8.305)

Through Simon's EAP work, he appeared to have gained in confidence in relation to communication. His potential coping strategy for dealing with his big fear of talking to other people was to see them as the horse – as animals. Simon therefore used his success and pleasant experience with the horse to provide himself with confidence to speak to other people. Thus the skill of communication became transferable from EAP to life outside the therapeutic setting.

Danny – reciprocity of trust

Danny's therapeutic work with the horses contained a strong focus upon trust. The relevance of this theme was explicitly stated by the participant. When asked about how he related EAP work to the outside world Danny replied:

"Trust, sense of trust. Eh, I think during addiction or during being an alcoholic, eh you lose it a lot and with this [EAP] it puts a lot back because you do feel a sense of loss and you haven't got any self-worth you feel a bit, well not a bit, your esteem is down you feel, like I say, your confidence has gone" (15.553)

The experience of feeling trusted linked directly to an increased self-confidence within the participant:

"... now I can understand why they use the horses as eh, as eh, a therapy because it gave you back a certain amount of self esteem it gave you back a lot of your self-confidence and it gave you a chance to trust which a lot of us don't". (15.564)

Danny saw the work with the horses as an opportunity to practice trusting again. It seems that Danny's experience of EAP was related to not just trying to put trust into another living creature but also the horse offering it back to him. This led to a sense of satisfaction:

"...you get a sense of satisfaction from it because you have got such a large animal to put its hooves into your hands you have got its trust". (7.240)

The value of using horses related back to Simon's view of the horses as strong and powerful. It appeared that the fact the size of the horse (large) made the experience even more powerful for Danny. The size of the horse implicitly stated that the participant could not *make* the horse do anything. Therefore the perception of the horse trusting him was even more valuable to Danny as it was voluntary on the horse's part. This was reflected in a subsequent quote:

"...makes you think how powerful they are and that animal has allowed you to be close to it and be part of their herd if you like and you are trusting and they are trusting to you. That is the only way I can explain it really". (25.928)

In the above quote, it seems that not only was there a trust between horse and human but Danny took his perception of the experience one step further. By feeling trusted Danny became part of the horses' world by momentarily joining their herd. It may be that the repercussions of his addiction had made him feel isolated from the rest of the world but the work with the horses helped Danny to feel part of a group again. Perhaps, in a similar light to Jake, Danny experiences this as an emotionally restorative experience. That is, the EAP experience served to meet emotional needs that had previously not been met.

During the interview, Danny's terminology in relation to describing 'trust' triggered the researcher to imagine trust as an 'item' that Danny had originally lost due to his addiction. The 'item' of trust then reappeared as Danny worked with the horse and it was passed in a reciprocal fashion between the horse and Danny throughout the therapeutic process:

> *"And they offer it [the hoof] to you and so it is all this sense of trust, from you to the horse and the horse giving it back to you, once they are comfortable with you and it is such a satisfying job to do." (10.369)*

By having trust in himself and the horse Danny was able to work with the horse without fear:

> *"...we got very close to the horse obviously, we were doing, and of course getting into fairly dangerous areas, around the back legs but you weren't worried, at all because you had the confidence within yourself and the horse, that you weren't going to get hurt." (9.324)*

And:

> *"...again it is all about a sense of trust from the horse and actually trust in yourself" (11.394)*

The trust initially moved between the horse and Danny. However, the above quote shows Danny accepting a trust within himself. That is, the horse did not just 'give' Danny trust but Danny felt it within himself and begans to trust himself.

The processes at work during Danny's EAP work were more relevant than the content of the work. As he put it:

> *"...it was nice, it was therapeutic was the word I am looking for. All be it cleaning crap and mud out of the hoof!" (11.409)*

Therefore, similar to other participants' experiences, the value of the EAP experiences laid in the *meanings* that a participant placed upon the experience. The content of cleaning a horse's hooves becames the vehicle for the therapeutic processes to take place and as Danny put it:

> *"Once I was told, if I focus I can do this, it will work and you have to give trust over to it [the EAP work] I suppose and it worked." (12.459)*

Peter - Internalising the power of the horse.

For Peter, the horses initially represented a physical threat. In the beginning of the interview he often referred to the size and his perceived strength of the horse:

> *"... it's just because the sheer size of the animal and eh you know they are just so powerful and... just because of the sheer size I think it was but eh, not, it wasn't anything really do to with what is going to come out of it, you know feeling wise, eh, it's just the sheer size and power, and just being so close to them." (1.25)*

And:

> *"He was a big boy can't remember his name now, very similar to Luna but a little bit bigger and, first of all I felt a big scared you know, big horse, very powerful, thought it would kick or play up, eh, and to begin with, yeah it did play up." (3.127)*

As Peter described his work with the horse their relationship appeared to change. Peter became more confident as he described feeling more connected to the horse. There were times during the interview when Peter indirectly presented a concept of the horse and himself as having a strong emotional connection:

> *"It [the horse] showing, I don't know, just shows it's emotions through the way I act. You know, as I say there is a sort of chemical between the two, very stra/ and don't know, just makes me feel good about myself. Amazing, absolutely amazing."* (10.492)

The emotional connection was particularly prominent in the initial part of the above quote. Peter suggested that the horse showed it's emotions through the way Peter acted. This proposed a strong understanding and link between the two and indirectly stated that Peter was not only in tune with the horse's emotions but also able to act them out as if he were the horse.

When referring back through the interview it is interesting to note Peter's perception of the horse as immensely powerful. This power appeared to have been internalised by Peter – thus rendering Peter to be strong and powerful (just like the horse). This was further emphasised by Peter's description of an invisible chemical that moved between him and the horse. This gave a sense of fluidity between the horse and human and therefore supported the idea of Peter internalising the horse's strengths. Furthermore, most of Peter's descriptions of this process were described as 'amazing' and resulting in positive feelings.

The purpose of internalising the strength of the horse may be related to Peter's emotional difficulties and related addiction before coming into the clinic. During the interview Peter mentioned how he wanted to resist cravings in the future:

"...if we do get a craving we notice how that, how to deal with them. Whether it is thinking about the past or the pain and hurt you have put people through and yourself..."(9.410).

The above quote suggested a potential sadness about his past actions. The researcher also noticed this in Peter's body language as she watched him talk about having hurt other people. It may be that Peter's internalising of the horse's power was a strategy to increase his internal strength and thus increase his future ability to resists the addictive object of alcohol when discharged from the clinic.

Greg –addictive patterns as filter for the EAP experience.

Throughout Greg's interview he often spoke of feeling bored whilst being with the horses. This seemed incongruent to the previously mentioned, apparently powerful experience of feeling physically attached to the horse (4.159).

However, Greg offered a link between his boredom during parts of his EAP experience and his addictive behaviours:

"...the whole time I was just standing there [with the horse] *and I am thinking come on do something do something which made me think back to my normal life which is sort of nothing happens so that is why I must go and have a bet all the time so that brought something up really real for me."*(4.148)

From the above quote it can be assumed that for Greg, boredom would often be a trigger to addictive behaviour. As a scientist-practitioner this made the researcher query why boredom would lead to such extreme behaviour.

It is possible that the gambling served to avoid internal discomfort. Greg shed some light upon this idea when he described his experience of physically having a

separate head and chest. On further exploration this was understood by Greg, as the separation between his head (logical thinking) and heart (emotional awareness). This idea is also reflected in earlier quotes about having two consciousnesses.

Greg's separation of his head and chest was understood by himself and others (therapists and clients within the clinic) as his lack of 'emotional thinking'. Perhaps by accessing his emotions Greg would begin to feel an internal discomfort and this is what leads him to avoid feeling emotions, and therefore led him to addictive behaviours as a form of avoidance.

Towards the end of the interview Greg reflected upon his need to be thinking with his emotions and was ambivalent about trying to be more emotionally aware and think less with his head. This concept of head versus heart appeared to have been reflected in the EAP processes:

> *'I sort of got a bit but it was the thought of trying too hard to get what I want. Last week it all happened so naturally and I just couldn't do it this week it was too much to ask for to get that experience back, I did want it so much but it was just never going to happen. I spent five, ten minutes doing that and it never happened and it really disappointed'* (9.395)

The above quote shows Greg's conscious attempt at achieving the physical connection with the horse that he had experienced the previous week. It may be that that the first week the experience was triggered due to momentary access to his emotions. Thus by trying very hard to have the same experience Greg was using his 'thinking' brain rather than his emotions to attempt to induce the experience again. He was unable to re-enact the experience because his thinking brain appeared to block his access to emotional awareness.

Greg's response to not achieving his desired goal was very similar to how his addiction was triggered. By feeling uncomfortable (either through boredom or by

not achieving what he is trying to achieve) Greg was triggered to avoid. In this case he wanted to disengage with the EAP work:

> *"I was thinking I just want to go now because I am not going to get that feeling I had last week."(9.402)*

In contrast to other participants, it seems that Greg expected something to happen *to* him rather than him proactively working with the horse to achieve. On the third EAP session Greg was again feeling bored:

> *"It is all something you have done before so I don't know it just seemed easy to get bored because of if you run out of things to do and you needed something to take it on each week, it is difficult because there is not really much else you can do with them in there. It is then more about I suppose trying to be with the horse, meditating and things like that which some people just can't do." (10.437)*

In the above quote, Greg showed some awareness of the idea of just being with the horse as beneficial. However, having once tried to recreate the initial experience and not succeeded he seemed reluctant to try again. The researcher wondered if the very last part of the quote referred to Greg's frustration with himself not being able to re-experience the previous sessions feelings, rather than *other* people's inability to meditate.

In summary of Greg's individual thematic experience it can be said that his triggers to addictive behaviour outside of therapy were reflected in his EAP experience. It seems that his avoidance of emotional experiences was a potential psychological coping mechanism to deal with feared distress. When sitting with Greg the researcher noted her own perception of Greg appearing guarded. This was reflected both in his body language and his manner of talking. This perceived defensive behaviour could be another example of Gregs avoidance of emotional experiences.

His momentary experience of being physically linked to the horse was perceived by Greg to reflect the incongruence between his emotional consciousness and cognitive consciousness. Perhaps despite of his ambivalence about becoming more emotionally aware his attempt to re-experience the feeling of being attached to the horse was an attempt to access his suppressed emotions and this suggests an internal desire to access emotions despite the potential cognitive barriers.

Clive – experiencing the 'true' self

Through the EAP work, Clive described re-discovering his true self. His experience of spending time with the horses offered him the opportunity to remove defensive behaviours and be able to strip away the other 'self' that he believed was linked to his 16 years of addiction:

> *"...with the horses just let everything go, you don't have to be somebody you're not, just you with the horse. It's you whose coming out with the horse, it's the real you, should I say, it's not the person who you have been for the last sixteen years, it was the real me that was there." (18.654)*

Clive's description suggested that throughout the past 16 years he had not been in touch with what he considered to be his 'real' self. In fact the 'real' self had been so far removed from his awareness and to express this he emphasized the idea of being his 'real' self through a metaphor:

> *"I was relaxed, it was a different world for me [the EAP], it was away from everything else that goes on, I could feel at ease with myself and at ease with the horse, yes." (14. 544)*

By re-experiencing himself as he used to be prior to his addiction, he was able to feel at ease. His statement above about being at ease with himself and at ease with the horse could be understood in different ways. Firstly, his relaxed state may simply be a reflection of being confident around the horse. However, it may be that by being able to feel 'at ease' with the horse he was able to allow himself to feel at ease with his real self. This is later supported with the following quote:

> *"I thought it was brilliant, I really enjoyed it, it just takes you away to a different kind of world, if you can let yourself be, let yourself go there and put your trust in the horses and they'll put their trust in you." (15.557)*

The experience of *being* trusted by the horse appears to have been vital to Clive's experience. Clive was not explicit about how trust related to his 'real self'; however, it could be speculated that the experience of feeling trust and trusting the horse back, led to a relaxation of Clive's expectation of himself. Perhaps it reduced his internal critical voice. This process may have led to Clive allowing the 'Clive without the addiction' to surface.

The researcher remembered Clive's comment about 'letting yourself be' as a poignant moment during the interview. The comment suggested that he was perhaps unable, in the past, to let him-self be 'real'. It also painted a picture of being a tough self critic who was unable to be kind to himself. The horse's apparent lack of negative judgment and perhaps perceived kindness could be seen as modeling an acceptance and approval of the real Clive. This may have allowed Clive to do the same – i.e. begin to approve of the real self.

Having been absorbed into the world of addiction for 16 years the experience of EAP offered Clive an opportunity to momentarily forget and escape what he described as a 'living hell':

> *"...it's completely opposite [to the world of addiction], you forget about everything and the world where I've been for the*

last sixteen years, it's been, as I say, living hell, but then to come to a different world and actually relax and forget things, I just found it brilliant, really good." (16.580)

The effect of seeing the real self was not simply a short term benefit. Clive was able to apply his experience and insight into his future options:

"I think it shows you there is another world, it shows you there is something out there where you can go and relax and be at peace with yourself, instead of being in the world what you've been in and beating yourself up and plodding through life."(17.611)

The above quote suggested a more active role by the participant choosing a future path rather than passively accepting and 'plodding' through his difficulties.

Clive's perception of the future was not only about being in a different place but it also entailed the idea of allowing new concepts into his cognitive structures:

" I think it has been a very important experience to me…you don't have to be where I've been, you can be somewhere else if you let yourself be somewhere else, if you open yourself and you let something else in there and I think, I was probably a closed up person, well I was a closed up person, there is no doubt about that…"(17.616)

The process of working with the horse encouraged Clive to 'open up' and allow the horse in, almost like a practice for what he would like to do when entering his 'new world' without addiction:

"… I was just constantly involved in my world and no one else mattered and nothing else mattered, where [as] being with the horses and the equine [therapy] obviously, I'm looking after

something else, I'm looking after the horse, I've got to show my feelings to the horse for it to trust me." (17.624)

This final quote states that to achieve trust from the horse, Clive had to show his true self. Clive's description of his closed world of addiction suggests that he did not show his feelings to anyone else and thus was unable to experience trust from other people. It seems that by living the 'real self' whilst being with the horse, Clive began to experience what it was like to care about another living being and this experience in itself opened a door of options for his future behaviour with other people. That is, perhaps he had a choice of allowing others to see the real Clive. And perhaps caring for someone else could have a similar positive outcome as it did with the horse.

Piers – accessing the emotional self.

As noted previously, when interviewing Piers the researcher noted her own perception of Piers as guarded in terms of self disclosure and struggling to access his emotions. The researcher was left with a feeling of listening to a participant communicate on an emotionally superficial level. This internal experience for the researcher was reflected in Piers' description later on in the interview of his more long term difficulties:

"I think it is quite nice to have non verbal communication because it was quite nice to...I enjoyed it at least. I found it personally quite hard to kind of open up and get in touch with emotions so that was something that I think has been one of my issues for many years. I think it was interesting to not have the pressure of not having to vocalise anything." (13.563)

Other participants did not refer directly to non-verbal communication but for Piers this seemed to provide comfort due to the lack of pressure to speak. Thus EAP provided a potentially therapeutic space within which the experience was perceived as non-threatening.

Piers used the word 'interesting' to describe the experience of not having to speak. The choice of word is non-emotional and again reflects Piers' struggle to access his emotions. However, by looking at further quotes the reader is offered an insight into Piers' possible internal struggles of limited awareness of his emotions:

> *"...just feeling a little bit more because of the fact that you have this non verbal communication with the horses you have to kind of get into your feelings a little bit more."* (9.408)

The above quote suggests that having a conscious awareness of his emotions was not a common experience for Piers; however, the EAP work offered the opportunity, or rather, encouraged him to access his emotional self. Piers explained the need for non-verbal communication when being with the horse as the reason he began to access his emotions.

Piers therefore saw EAP as an experience that allowed a new aspect of his self to surface. He was able to begin accessing his emotional self. If this is the case then being with a horse seemed to provide Piers with a very novel experience, not purely due to the novelty of the therapeutic approach (using horses) but more importantly perhaps the novelty of the perceived requirement to access his emotional self in order to engage with the horse.

Piers described getting *into* his feelings. The participant's meaning of this comment is not explicitly known but it could be understood to represent an experience of entering a part of his self that was unknown or less consciously accessible than others. Maybe Piers was beginning to build an awareness of an unknown part of his self and this was partly why he found it so difficult to describe his experience in detail:

"I think it was more of a subtle thing. Definitely a sort of subconscious vibe going on there. It is really hard to describe it really is..." (13.573)

The experience seems to reflect the process of *something* happening but there was an unknown quality to it and Piers was unable to put the experience into words. It may be that this elusive process active during the EAP sessions was related to an internal congruency that Piers experienced. That is, there as no internal conflict between for example, his feelings and his behaviour. He described this experience as 'just being':

"...the fact that we weren't talking, the fact that we were kind of just being...it was interesting yeah." (15.603)

The EAP experience provided Piers with an opportunity to simply exist in the present. Feelings were allowed to be experienced without any complications or attached cognitive meanings and in contrast to other participants, there seemed little concern with linking the experience to his past or the future.

It therefore seems that the experience of being with the horses and 'connecting' with the horses offered an opportunity for Clive to momentarily be more aware of his internal experiences (what he is feeling) and therefore he was able to access his emotional self, a part of his self construct that did not seem readily available prior to his EAP experience.

3.7 'Christian' –Individual analysis.

One of the participants in the present study had a very different experience to the others. By incorporating his analysis with the other participants' experience, Christian's perception of EAP may have been lost and falsely 'shoe-horned' into themes that would be rather tentatively linked to his interview. Therefore, his

analysis was carried out separately and in the following section the themes that appeared throughout Christian's analysed transcript will be presented. Links to the other participants' themes will be made where appropriate and explicitly pointed out.

Unlike the other participants, Christian was unable to engage fully with the EAP work. He explained this was because he was bitten by a dog when he was six years old and since then had been frightened by any animal bigger than himself. Due to this fear he was initially unwilling to approach the horses.

I initially felt a sense of disappointment when Christian began his interview stating that EAP had not been helpful to him. On reflection, I wonder if this was sensed by Christian throughout the interview as he, at times, spoke of how he might have benefitted from it had he tried a little harder. During the interview, I was conscious of trying to remain open, reflective, empathic and inquisitive of his experience and listening back to the recording I feel that I did achieve this on one level. However, my personal belief in the power of animals in therapeutic settings was undeniably challenged and despite my best efforts, perhaps I struggled to relate to Christian as well as I did the other participants.

However, on reflection, his contrasting experience was grounding for me as a researcher and it prompted me to develop the more in-depth analysis section of 'participants' individual thematic experiences'. This theme ultimately served to draw together the other themes uncovered as expressed in figure 1 and therefore became a vital part of the entire study's findings. The challenge Christian presented me with therefore resulted in what I believe to be a more comprehensive analysis of all the participants' lived experiences of EAP.

Fear of horses

The presence of a large animal triggered fear in Christian. The fear was different to other participants' experience of initial fear, as theirs was followed by reduced anxiety. There was a conflict between Christian's emotional response of fear and his

cognitive rationalisation of the situation. By not being able to override his fear Christian was left with a feeling of regret:

> *"...like I say I walked into a field and straightaway my defences were up. So I feel guilty now because I really didn't give myself a chance"* (17.794)

This suggests that on reflection the participant felt that there could have been an opportunity to gain from the experience. In another part of the interview he explained what he thought might have been gained:

> *"I really, truly do realise that the reason why it didn't work for me is because of my fear of the animals, that's how I would sum it up. If I didn't have a fear about them animals, because of that five minutes tranquillity and peace I got [meditation], I could have had them two hours peace and tranquillity that Darren was getting"* (13.589)

Inability to relate

As previously mentioned the forming of a relationship was vital for the therapeutic benefits for other participants. Christian was unable to develop a relationship and thus the benefits experienced by others from the process of relating to the horses, are not experienced by Christian:

> *"But what I understand about it is if they relate to that horse that horse will relate to them. That is my understanding I got of it, but that was the difference, in golf I knew what I was doing, in the horse thing, when I got there it was just like – there's no rocket science to it, there's no nothing so like I had an open mind, but I don't think it helped for me because of the fact that I was*

frightened of any animal bigger than me and more powerful. (3.133)

In the above quote a second factor is presented. Christian contrasted his golf therapy with EAP. By not feeling comfortable with the lack of structure in EAP his fear was potentially increased. In addition, by using the fear as an explanation, Christian seemed to engage in the EAP work with minimal effort. The volume of therapy in the whole inpatient programme appeared to have been experienced as too great for Christian:

"And there was a switch off point as well where maybe I could have got more comfortable with the horses, maybe too much therapy inside here [the inpatient clinic] *made me think well these two hours I go to this Equine thing I'm just going to relax and meditate and not really make the effort because I'm not interested and I can't relate to them, so maybe it was a bit of ignorance on my behalf,"* (4.145)

Thus the lack of relationship building with the horses appeared to have been due to three factors: fear of horses, lack of structure and a perception of too much therapy overall.

Despite the difficulties relating to the horse, Christian experienced a momentary overcoming of his fears. This was perceived as an achievement:

"A sense of achievement that I'd overcome a fear. I think I ended up knowing that that horse wasn't going to hurt me" (9.399)

This momentary sense of achievement was based on feeling in control rather than linked to feelings of connecting with the horse as other participants described. Christian explained:

"...I did feel comfortable for five minutes, but then that one time when I didn't actually do the jump and the horse went out of control I didn't feel in control." (9.367)

Relaxation through environmental factors

Despite the issues previously mentioned, there were also moments when the fear subsided. These were experienced as relaxing and were described by the participant as moments of 'meditation'. The meditation increased the participant's awareness of his surroundings by attending to his auditory sense:

> *"...when I actually closed my eyes all I could hear was peace and tranquillity and relaxation. It was the best feeling ever that I'd had".* (18.782)

Rather than attributing the relaxed experience to the presence of the horse, as many other participants did, Christian placed more significance upon his surroundings:

> *"I think definitely the setting for the meditation was the most important".* (7.304)

And:

> *"...the actual, the field, the noises, just peace, the tranquillity, everything about it was just perfect"* (12.537)

And:

> *"It just felt so relaxing and it felt as though that space was your part of the world for that two hours." (*7.284)

Like other participants the experience was described as isolated from other things around him. Christian did however not include the horse in his isolation as other participants did, rather he spoke of the value of the physical environment. However, similarly to other participants, he described not having any specific thoughts in his mind and existing in the moment. He experienced this via an increased awareness of his visual and auditory senses:

> *"So yeah I felt comfortable, it felt relaxing and all I could see when I was meditating was, before I actually closed my eyes the*

horse, Pearly [horse] *and the six or seven people that was stood around it, that's all I could see or think about, and then the only thought that would come into my head were the noises that I could feel and unwind, or I could hear and unwind."*(6.239)

When Christian meditated, his fear appeared to momentarily subside. By opening his senses to other stimuli in the surrounding environment he was able to emotionally forget the fear. This suggested a potential ability to engage with the therapeutic process of EAP on one level (meditation); however, direct work with the horses was blocked by the factors previously mentioned.

Unlike other participants, Christian was unable to relate his experience to his external world. He reported that the meditation helped him to sleep whilst at the clinic; however, on a more long term basis no links were made. This was experienced with a sense of disappointment:

"I wish I'd have got something out of it because it was relaxing. Relaxing is all I can say about it. Relaxing didn't relate to what's going to happen when I get out of here." (15.654)

Overall, Christian had a very different experience of EAP compared to the other participants. Some similarities were noted such as the relaxed internal state and a momentary sense of achievement. However, the precipitating factors that facilitate Christian's relaxed state were based on the experience of the environment rather than the experience of the EAP processes with the horses.

The initial fear that other participants described, was also different to Christian's fear as his was based on past experiences rather than in-the-moment perceptions of the horse as dangerous. The lack of engagement in the therapeutic intervention was mainly due to the conditioned fear; however, at other stages throughout the interview it was speculated that the client may have been able to engage further had he wanted to do so. This suggests that the initial fear was perhaps used as a reasoning tool to avoid further engagement with the therapeutic approach of EAP.

3.8 Summary of Analysis

Figure 1 (see page 119) demonstrates the analysis' superordinate (in blue circles) and subordinate themes (in text boxes) and their relation to eachother. The diagram is included to present the thematic findings within a diagram that summarises the findings of the study.

The diagram shows the central theme of the participants' individual thematic experiences. The central position that this theme takes within the diagram, reflects the way the participants' perceptions and personal themes were crucial to understanding each person's experience of EAP. Around the central themes for each participant are the themes of 'accessing the internal self', 'experiencing the external world' and 'forming a relationship'. The arrows leading from the central theme to these surrounding themes represents the way each individual participant's personal thematic experience strongly influenced the content of the surrounding themes. The arrows between the peripheral themes reflect the way the themes influenced each other and how each theme was not isolated but rather interlinked and affected by the others throughout the EAP processes.

The process of moving between themes throughout the EAP sessions led participants to the fourth theme of 'therapeutic change'. This theme in turn fed back into the central theme of 'participants' individual thematic experiences' and thus the cycle continues.

It is important to note that Figure 1 does not represent a 'process model' but offers an interpretation of how the themes interlink and inform each other. The analysis did not reveal a step-by-step process but a fluid movement between themes ultimately serving to offer therapeutic change and add to the richness of each participant's individual thematic experience.

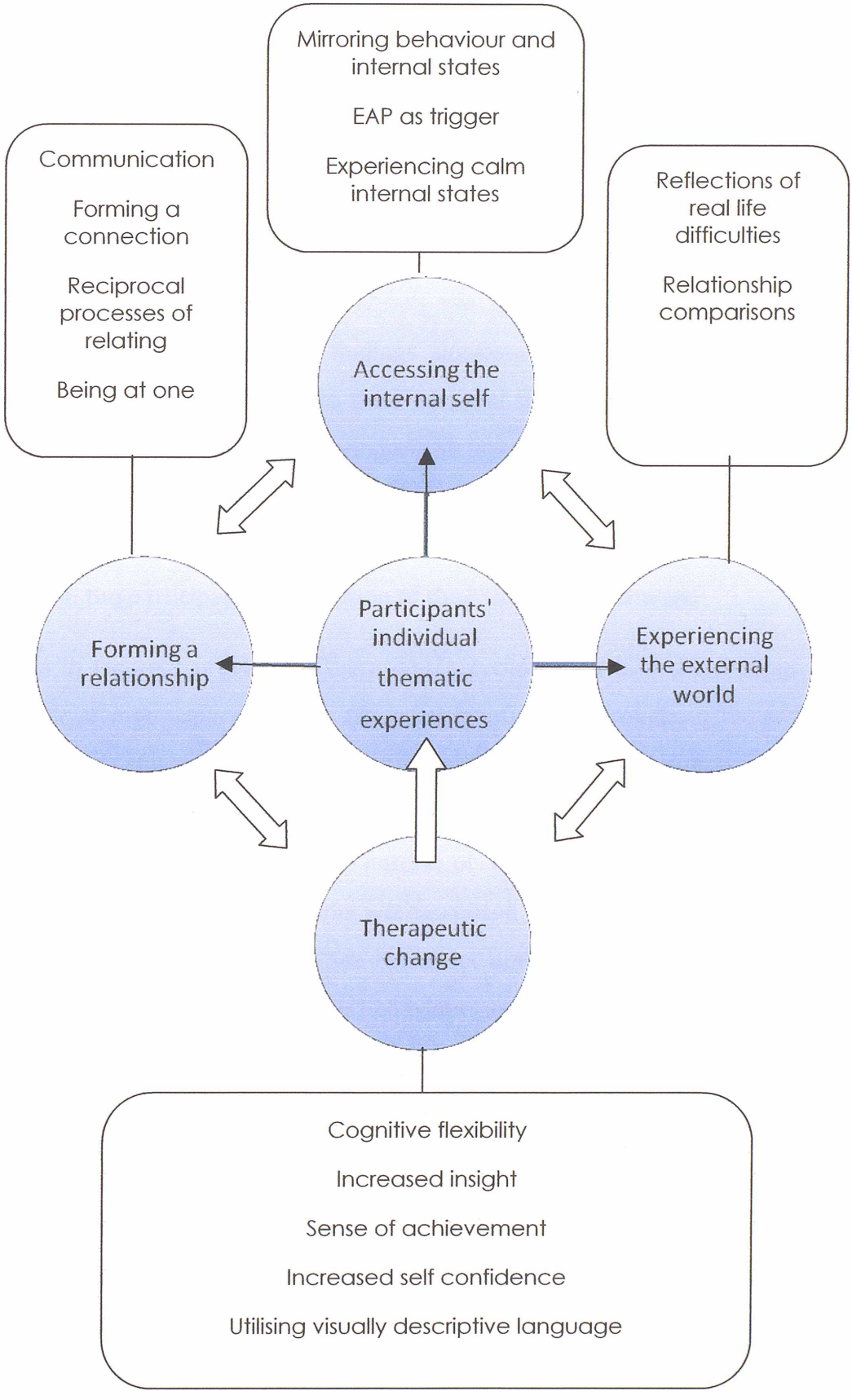

Figure 1. Thematic links between participants' EAP experiences.

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the present study shows the complexity and diversity of the described EAP experiences. The findings suggest each participant to have an individual central theme relating to their personal struggles and conflicts. Around the personal theme lie the experiencing of the internal self and the external world from which each participant has come. These two experiences together with the intense process of forming a relationship with the equines seem to have played some role in the participants' description of their therapeutic change.

As shown in Figure 1 previously, there was a cyclical nature in the findings. The therapeutic change experienced by the participants was, throughout the analysis, related back to the participants' own overarching themes and subsequently fed back into their internal and external experiences. The development of this cycle may have been facilitated by the nature of EAP work not being a one-off therapeutic intervention. Participants were exposed to EAP once a week for three weeks and this offered opportunities to reflect upon their experiences between sessions and for some to change their behaviours around the horses when revisiting the EAP.

One participant, out of the eight interviewed, described finding it difficult to engage in EAP. Christian noted having a fear of animals larger than himself due to a childhood experience of being bitten by a dog. This fear of large animals stopped Christian engaging in the EAP process and despite reporting moments of feeling relaxed the overall benefit of EAP was limited. It is important to note Christian's lack of benefit of the therapeutic approach as it raises the issue of EAP not being appropriate for all client groups. It suggests that screening of potential clients is important for future practice of EAP and that clients' history with animals may be a

factor in influencing the choice of EAP as a suitable therapeutic approach. Due to Christian's lack of engagement with EAP, the following discussion refers the other seven participants only.

It is important to recognise that the participants in the present study were in-patients in a 3-week addiction programme. Overall EAP was a small adjunct therapeutic intervention that was interlinked with the overall philosophy of the clinic's treatment programme – the 12-steps. Therefore separating out the effect of EAP and the effect of other therapeutic interventions used at the clinic is difficult.

However, there were themes described throughout the analysis that appear to be directly linked to the EAP work. One has to therefore tentatively view the findings as related to the EAP experience but of course, alternative factors from other treatment approaches within the programme cannot be ignored. The reader is asked to keep this in mind whilst reading the discussion chapter.

The original research question for the present study was, what are the participants' lived experiences of EAP and how might these be perceived to facilitate psychological change? The findings represented in the analysis offer some answers to this question. For the purpose of this discussion, the findings will be discussed under the following headings.

Firstly, the discussion will address some of the key aspects of the analysis that appear to have been crucial to the participants' experiences of EAP. These will be discussed under the headings of 'the role of relationships in EAP' and 'the therapeutic value of visually descriptive language'. The purpose of these sections is to unpack the analytic findings whilst trying to offers some answers to the first part of the research question: What are the participants' lived experiences of EAP? The discussion will therefore not be presented under the main thematic headings used during the analysis. This is mainly due to the overlapping of discussion points between themes. Hence, rather than using them as headings, the superordinate

themes and subordinate themes will be referred to under appropriate sections in order to link the findings to the discussion.

Following the first part of the discussion, the focus will then turn to the therapeutic value of CBT within EAP practice. This section will argue CBT to be an appropriate therapeutic approach within which to ground EAP practice. This will lead on to addressing the second aspect of the research question, -how might the EAP experience be perceived to facilitate psychological change? Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning in combination with the humanistic paradigm will be used to explore the way participants' perceived (and achieved) therapeutic change. Also, of particular interest in this section are the participants' own 'creations' of the Rogerian core conditions during their EAP work. This will be presented under the heading of 'EAP as a facilitator of therapeutic change?' The conclusion will summarise the discussion points and the value of the research overall.

Finally, the study will be discussed in relation to its potential implications for Counselling Psychology. Within this section, strengths and weakness of the study will also be discussed along with proposals for future EAP research.

4.2 The role of relationships in EAP

The concept of relationships had a multidimensional nature within the analysis. Firstly, the perceived reciprocal nature of the human-horse relationship appeared to serve a psychological function in meeting the emotional needs of participants. Secondly, links were made between the perceived relationship with the horse and the participants' external human-to-human relationships. The implications of this aspect will be discussed in relation to its values as a therapeutic concept. Finally, the *process* of forming a relationship with the horses was central to all the

participants' experience of EAP. That is, the way participants formed relationships seemed more important than the actual *content* of each EAP activity.

The above dimensions of relationship dynamics all have a potential value in understanding the EAP experience, and further discussion of these aspects may offer ideas of how relationships within EAP may serve to benefit clients therapeutically. The role of relationships in EAP is here discussed using Hinde's (1981) previously presented dimensions of human relationship as a framework.

With reference to the first participant experience noted above, participants described the relationship between themselves and the horses as emotionally reciprocal. For some participants this was explained in relation to trust. Perhaps one of the reasons the participants felt trust between the horse and themselves and were able to be emotionally open with the horses, was related to Hinde's (1981) relationship dimension of 'reciprocity and complementarity'. The reciprocal aspect of this dimension is related to one person taking account of another person's feelings and needs. The important aspect of reciprocity in this case is not the obligatory reciprocity often experienced between acquaintances, but rather complimentary reciprocity of behaviours between two people that go together to make a whole, leading to a more intimate and less superficial relationship.

As was found in the analysis, the horse's presence partly served to meet the participants' internal needs, and this was facilitated by the perception of the reciprocal nature of the horses' actions. Therefore, these participant experiences lead to a conceptualization of the equine-human relationship as intimate, close, and therefore less superficial.

One way that the perceived intimacy between horse and participants seemed to be constructed was the way participants could cognitively shape their own experiences with the horses as they wished. For example, many participants spoke of how the horse understood them and reacted to their emotional needs. Participants also mentioned the horse having feelings and even at times desiring to spend time with the participants. These were the participants' perceptions of the horses'

behaviours. It is therefore likely that participants cognitively created their own feedback from the horses. Thus, internal needs were met by the horses, not by how they overtly reacted to the participants, but by how the participants needed and desired to understand the horses' behaviours. This relates to Hinde's (1981) domain of 'interpersonal perception'.

This domain suggests that a person's view of the self and other people's perception of the self is vital to relationship forming. For the participants in the present study the horses' perceived perception of them might have been used as a form of self-acceptance. This is reflected in the present study's findings; as previously mentioned, the participants' needs were met via their own interpretations of the horses' actions. Perhaps by experiencing another living being's acceptance the participants were able to begin accepting themselves.

With this concept in mind of the participants creating a relationship to suit their emotional needs, the question then arises of why the participants constructed such relationships with the horses. The motivation was, for some, initially described as a way to stay safe around such a large animal. That is, communication with the horse served to protect the participants from not getting physically hurt by the horse. However, it seems that there was also a psychological motivation to form a relationship.

It may be that the relationship with the horse was perceived as safer in comparison to human relationships. As explained by some participants the horses offered a lack of personal judgment, a non-existence of risk of betrayal (at least no verbal skills with which to betray) and an indifference to the addiction part of the participant. This was a safe relationship to form and within which to practice new skills. Participants linked their EAP work to communication with the horses and some practiced communication skills with the horses once they felt a relationship had been formed.

In contrast to the above idea of the participants' meeting of emotional needs via reciprocity, some participants initially experienced rejection or feelings of anger in

reaction to the horse's behaviour (e.g., Jake). This relates to the second category of relational experiences listed at the beginning of this section: the relationship with the horse reflecting external relationships.

On researching relationships, Duck and Miell (1986) noted an ever-present concern within human relationships of the other person in a friendship changing his mind and 'going off' his friend. This idea serves as a constant threat to the relationship. It is possible that for some participants the history of rejection in their lives was played out during EAP, therefore reflecting not a desired relationship as above, but rather an external relationship from the participant's past experiences.

It seems that the experience of re-living external relationships via the EAP activities triggered a process of insight into the participants' relationship difficulties. When these difficulties were identified and named by the participants, the dynamics in the relationship between the horse and participant changed. The change moved from an unpleasant experience of feeling rejected, to a restorative experience of emotional needs being met, for example, feeling needed and part of the relationship.

Thus, overall, the horses served a dual role for some participants. Firstly, they served as a reflection of participants' relational difficulties and secondly, they facilitated the 'playing out' of a desired, comforting, and relaxing experience that met emotional needs. For some participants this experience might tentatively be related to the Klosko et al. (2003) concept of 'limited reparenting'. This concept suggests that the therapeutic relationship can offer an emotionally supportive relationship that the clients needed but did not get from their parents as children. Thus the reciprocal relationship between horse and participant had the potential to be an emotionally restorative experience (to be discussed in relation to CBT shortly). This idea leads on to the importance of process within the development of the human-horse relationships.

The third aspect of the present section is related to the process by which the relationship was perceived to have developed. Duck (1999) highlights an obvious

consideration we need to make when thinking about relationship forming – primarily we enter relationships as 'human beings' (p.45). Humans will bring to a relationship what they 'carry' in the form of past experiences, personality traits and internal needs and anxieties. Therefore, the forming of a relationship is not based on a blank canvas of one person meeting another blank canvas. The amount a person self discloses to others is likely to be influenced by the person's past experiences and anxieties in relation to forming a relationship.

Hinde's (1981) domain of 'content of interactions' emphasizes the development of intimacy partly via the process of self disclosure. Interestingly, several participants used the word 'intimacy' when describing their relationship with the horses. This matches the self-disclosure idea that Hinde links with intimacy; the participants experienced self-disclosure when being with the horses. Some participants verbally self-disclosed to the horse, but on the more subtle non-verbal level, the self-disclosure was perhaps more powerful. Participants described allowing themselves to be the 'real self' when spending time with the horses. Therefore, it was not so much about telling the horses about themselves in order to self disclose but rather that the intimacy was developed via the process of the participants feeling safe to stop defensive behaviours. This led to participants becoming more congruent behaviourally with their internal states and needs. The process of being true to the internal self, and feeling safe to do so, was related to trusting the horses and the horses trusting the participants.

This process relates to Hinde's (1981) other domain within relationship forming, 'qualities of interactions'. Within this domain, he emphasizes that the *processes* at work when relating to others are more important than the *content* of forming a relationship. So, for example, the action of cleaning the horses' hooves became almost irrelevant, as it was the acceptance and trust that was communicated to the participant via this act that became therapeutic, not the act itself. This non-verbal communication is important for closeness in relationship to develop, and as many social psychologists have noted (e.g., Argyle, 1967) non-verbal communication is a way for intimacy to be conveyed.

There is an important distinction to be made between psychological and physical intimacy. Physical relates to touch and proximity whereas psychological refers to emotional closeness. Through the nature of the EAP activities, participants were physically close to the horses; however, the meaning of being close to an animal is likely to be different to the meaning of being close to a human. It is hard to compare the two, and such a comparison is not within the scope of this study.

However, the intimacy described by participants was also psychological and it involved a perception of the horse understanding and being in tune with how the participant was feeling. This may be of particular relevance to the participants who expressed a previous lack of emotional sharing with other people. Of course, as previously noted there was a safety in disclosing to the horse due to the lack of risk involved. This risk refers to the impossibility of verbal communication between human and horse and it facilitated a safe space within which participants could self disclose. Although client and psychologist usually *do* verbally communicate, certain aspects of this part of the horse-human connection bear a strong resemblance to the conventional therapeutic space. This will be discussed in more detail later in the discussion.

By allowing themselves to experience a more emotionally open and self-disclosing relationship, participant's may have been able to practice something they had long feared and managed to avoid using their addictive behaviour as a coping strategy. Dayton (2000) suggests that the maladaptive or dysfunctional relationship styles that people with addiction may have learnt in childhood are hard to retrain. For retaining to begin, a review of the past 'trauma' is necessary before clients can become more emotionally literate. For many participants the experience of being with the horses triggered emotions and cognitions related to past experiences, and this process was followed with the building of more emotionally open relationships with the horses.

The results from forming relationships with the horses for many participants were that they began to notice that the process of allowing themselves to be more emotionally open (emotionally literate) was perhaps not as frightening as predicted

and thus the idea of trying it with another human being became a possibility rather than being impossible. The horses almost functioned as a stepping-stone to the real experience of relating to another human being.

To summarise all three dimensions within the EAP relationship, the concept that keeps returning throughout the findings of the present study is that the idiosyncratic perceptions of the EAP experience are crucial to the understanding of the therapeutic approach. There are clear commonalities that emerge, participants re-living external relationships, the EAP relationship meeting emotional needs, and the process by which this happens being key to the therapeutic experience. However, without the idiosyncratic aspect of each participant it seems that much of the value of EAP is lost.

Therefore in support of Karol's (2007) comments of EAP needing skilled professionals for it to be therapeutically powerful, it seems clear that with a skilled EAP professional the therapeutic experience is likely to be enhanced with the processing of the client's individual experiences during and after EAP. Solely relying on the relationship between horse and client to be therapeutic long-term would be naïve and narrow-minded. The true value in EAP seems to lie within the numerous opportunities and insights that are presented to client and therapist throughout the application of the adjunct therapeutic approach. These insights into the client's internal world and perception of the external world are rich in information and offer an opportunity for client and therapist to move beyond the immediate experience of EAP into a therapeutic territory that has the potential to offer psychological change on a more long-term basis.

So, in summary, understanding how relationship are experienced was one way that EAP provided insight into the participants' internal worlds, and the analysis indicated that EAP has the potential to heal and develop participants' capacity for relatedness. Further insight into the participants' worlds, and further ideas for how the psychologist might work therapeutically with clients, may be found within the visually descriptive language that participants used to describe, explain and emphasise various aspects of the EAP experience.

4.3 The therapeutic value of visually descriptive language.

Throughout the interviews, participants used a mixture of metaphors, similes and other figures of speech, to explain and describe their EAP experiences. This concept can be summarised as the use of visually descriptive language. This use of "word pictures" (Mandrell, 2006 p.136) as a way for clients to link their EAP experience to the outside life, reflects Kopp's (1995) suggestion that humans construct their reality metaphorically. This was evident in the way participants used visually descriptive language not only to describe what happened within the EAP work (between horse and participant) but they also to describe their understanding and experience of EAP on reflection – that is, when being interviewed for the research. For example, Jake described his overall EAP experience as, *'It's like getting a big cuddle I suppose'* (6.229).

This type of language was also used during EAP to describe the participants' experience whilst working with the horses. For example, the horses often served as representations of another person in the participants' lives. When the horses served this function, they not only represented the other person but they were also perceived to 'act' as the other person would have. This was shown for example when Jake spoke about being rejected by the horse. It seems that this is where some of the value of EAP becomes prominent. The combination of the client's cognitive perceptions of the horse's natural reactions offers a rich tapestry of understandings with which therapist and client can engage therapeutically.

It has previously been noted how many participants found it difficult to explicitly describe the connection that they experienced with the horse. The use of word pictures helped participants to express this experience. For example, Simon used words such as 'putty' and 'gelled' to describe the way the horse responded and related to him. This offers the image of a soft and pliable (putty) relationship that is physically merged (gelled). The image created by these words is visually strong and

supports other participants apparent internalising of the horses positive qualities such as power and strength – described in the analysis as 'being at one'.

Using the idea of the participants being at one with the horse, it may be that to some participants the horses were metaphors for the emotional strength that the participants seemed to internalise from the perception of the strength and power of the horses. For example, as previously described in the analysis, Peter internalised the power of the horse and took on a stronger and more confident identity. The horse therefore served as a metaphor for his new found internal confidence and strength. This was not explicitly stated in words but rather, was reflected in his description of the relational processes between the horse and himself. Therefore, not only could the participant *feel* an increased sense of confidence and perceived internal strength, but he could also *see* a visual representation of it through the horses' physical presence.

It was interesting to note how participants often used words such as 'feeling good' and 'feeling calm'; however, when asked to expand and explain why they felt this way, the participants sometimes struggled. As stated in the introduction, there is a split between the part of the brain that deals with emotion and the part that controls linguistic skills (Munion & Zeig, 1999). It may be that this is what the participants were experiencing and they thus used the visual qualities of word pictures in an attempt to understand and express their emotional experience of 'connecting' with the horses. For example, Peter described a *'wave going from, through the horse to you or vice versa'* (3.116). Munion et al.'s suggestion that access can be gained to the client's subconscious experience via metaphors is supported by the participants' visually descriptive way of expressing their emotional connection with the horses.

On a therapeutic level therefore, this suggests that there is a valuable space to be made for the use of visually descriptive language in clinical EAP work. Again, as Karol (2007) noted, the skills and qualification of the therapist become vital in noting these descriptive representations and then working to explore them further with the client. The horses appear to serve as catalysts to creating the symbols or

emblems but the processing of these requires a therapist. Without the processing of the verbal descriptions, the therapeutic benefit of these would be questionable.

It seems that one of the reasons that visually descriptive representations are of particular interest during EAP is the way the therapeutic approach differs to the more common therapeutic set up in a room with the therapist. The experiential aspect of EAP injects a visual element into the language use. That is, not only did participants gain imaginary visual images when using metaphors, symbols and emblems, but they also experienced *actual* visual input in the form of the horses representing the visually descriptive words. Thus a second sense (vision) was engaged and this may be one of the reasons that metaphors and word pictures are so prominent in the current EAP practitioners' writings about the therapeutic process (e.g., Bivens, Klontz, Klontz, & Leinart, 2007; Karol, 2007; Mandrell, 2006).

The author of the present study would argue that these nuances of visually descriptive language within EAP require a therapeutic approach that is willing to move *with* the client and constantly remain in the client's frame of reference as the client works with the horse. EAP does not 'fit' into a manual-based treatment style, but rather it is a moment-to-moment approach that actively engages client and therapist in present processes. The exploration that happens during EAP therefore becomes a piece of work where the client is the expert on his experiences and the perceptions he places upon these. The therapist's role is to work with the client to deepen the understanding of his experience and reflect on the outcomes of each noteworthy process within the EAP session. This approach to therapeutic work therefore sits comfortably within the Counselling Psychology view of the client-therapist balance (McLeod, 2003). The Counselling Psychologist is not the expert who diagnoses and treats the client; rather the client and therapist have an even power balance and work as a team with common goals and objectives.

Therefore, the EAP approach works within Counselling Psychology due to the common emphasis on the value of idiosyncratic work that deals directly with the client's experience and is client led.

Within this dynamic between client and therapist EAP work highlights important moments of affective, cognitive, or behavioural changes. These findings are processed to help the client increase insight into his difficulties and develop new and more adaptive ways to deal with his emotional distress.

The above-mentioned processes of uncovering cognitions, emotions, and behaviours provide a clear link to the therapeutic foundations of CBT through which the findings of the present study were analysed. The following section of the discussion will address how, based on the current findings, CBT can be used as a suitable theoretical framework from which to understand and utilise EAP processes therapeutically.

However, before moving on to the main theoretical framework of analysis , there is one other type of therapeutic approach that is note-worthy in relation to EAP and the use of visually descriptive language. Narrative therapy is an approach that views people (clients) as story-tellers whose narrative can be re-written during therapy (Winter, 2003). Via this process clients can externalise their problems and begin to 're-author' their lives in a new narrative. Narrative therapy views the described problems as separate from people (the person is not the problem itself) and it assumes that a person's skills, attributes, values, beliefs and abilities can help him/her to reduce the problem in their life (Morgan, 2000). Narrative therapy assumes that humans are interpreting beings that seeks to make sense of the world around them and this is done by linking certain events together across a time period and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them (Morgan, 2000). Often the initial stories told by a client are 'thin' in their descriptive qualities. Meaning that alternative information that does not match the person's story and sense making processes is ignored in the initial story. This can result in incomplete and negative narratives that have the potential to lead to emotional distress. The narrative process of therapy can help to deconstruct the story and then create 'thicker' descriptions by retelling the story with alternative pieces of information being considered (White, 2000). Ultimately, this serves to help the client manage

problems in a more helpful way, offering an alternative direction in life to that of the problem.

Narrative therapy has the potential for use during EAP sessions. The EAP experiences described by the participants through their visually descriptive language were stories in themselves and the process of deconstructing their stories was present when their behaviours, emotions and cognitions were triggered and sometimes challenged whilst working with the horses. The participants' beliefs and values were also highlighted during EAP and this could be a useful way of accessing and utilizing them through narrative therapy processes.

As previously mentioned, the experiences of working with the horses, often reminded participants of other relationships and experiences outside of the therapy setting. With this in mind, EAP could have the potential to help the client to tell his story using a 'thin' description initially. However, the 'thicker' description may also be facilitated using EAP as alternative appraisals were experienced during the work and thus the narrative became 'thicker' as the participants' stories began to be deconstructed and subsequently re-written. For example, learning to understand the horses reactions to his angry behaviour, (walking away because it was frightened), helped Simon to understand past reactions by other people in his life when he had shown anger. They had not rejected him; they had feared him, just as the horse did. This helped Simon to consider new information in his story and thus his narrative about peoples' reactions to his angry behaviour was deconstructed and re-written.

Thus, EAP has the potential to facilitate the initial story telling process through the imagery using the visually descriptive language used by participants. Perhaps more importantly it has the potential to help the client to reconstruct a new narrative that serves to move away from problem-saturated stories that have previously caused psychological distress.

4.4 The 'fit' of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy within EAP practice.

Due to its expansion, new ideas and therapeutic concepts are constantly being considered in their applicability to CBT. Therefore, the evaluation of EAP being used under the CBT framework is appropriately placed historically. That is, in the current climate of growth and new concepts being introduced into CBT (e.g., Bond, Hayes, Lillis, Luoma, & Masuda, 2006; Follette, Hayes, & Linehan, 2004) it seems acceptable to now consider an approach, even as novel as EAP. It is important to clarify that the idea is not to establish EAP as a *necessary* component of CBT; however, it has potential as a fitting therapeutic option for the appropriate client group and indeed, appropriate clinician.

When looking at the analysis of the present study there are some obvious links to CBT work. For example, the participants experienced being triggered cognitively, leading to affective and subsequent behavioural reactions. This process offers an opportunity for the clinician and the client to work on cognitions on an automatic thoughts level, that is, the most accessible level of cognitions (Beck, 1995). This type of in-vivo work can be very useful as the cognitions are active and relatively easily accessible. Therefore, the 'hot' cognitions (causing affective change) can be targeted and identified immediately for further work.

Due to this clear link between EAP and CBT it may be assumed that the clinician with a CBT framework should aim to actively engage the client in CBT work when these processes are present. It may be that at the beginning of the work, this is the most appropriate area of therapeutic intervention. However, there are other aspects of EAP that can be highly relevant to the Counselling Psychologist practitioner who uses a CBT framework.

As described above the participants in the present study found that relationships and visually descriptive language were both a vital part of the EAP work. It would be a shame to disregard these aspects because of the more obvious link to automatic thoughts.

The early writings about Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (e.g., Emery, Beck, Rush & Shaw, 1979) have been criticized for using a detached and distant clinician to 'apply' CBT principles. Since the days of early 'Beckian' CBT, therapists such as Safran and Segal (1990) have added depth to CBT via their emphasis upon the therapeutic relationship (which will be discussed under the heading of 'EAP as facilitator of therapeutic change?') as well as working on the importance of understanding the client's relationships outside of therapy to inform the therapeutic work. This emphasis on relationships links to the previously mentioned work of Young (1999) who developed schema-focused therapy to address the very idea of interpersonal difficulties based on the early development of childhood schemas.

As noted, the participants formed a strong relationship with the horses. Some aspects of these relationships bore a strong resemblance to the participants' external relationships. These were both childhood relationships and current adult relationships. Young (1999) hypothesises that childhood difficulties can relate to adult relationship difficulties later in life, thus if we take Young's stance to schemas, then the surfacing of relationship difficulties during EAP is of significant therapeutic interest. By exploring the participant's experiences of the EAP relationships the clinician can begin to help the client uncover not just the automatic thoughts but also the underlying beliefs (related to past relationships) that potentially serve to maintain their psychological difficulties.

As well as the relational theme, the use of metaphors and other visually descriptive figures of speech also offers the potential to work under a CBT framework. However, the use of visually descriptive language is not traditionally associated with CBT (Kopp, 1995). This may be because of their symbolic nature that seems to move client and therapist away from direct cognitions about the self, others, and the world.

Visually descriptive language however, provides an explorative opportunity to the therapeutic work that perhaps other approaches to understanding the client's world do not. Of course a client's word pictures cannot be directly tested,

challenged or questioned in the traditional CBT sense, but as seen in the present research findings they provide an insight into the way a client perceives situations. For example, one client spoke of his addiction being a small world where he could hide, and the 'real' world being big and frightening. If used therapeutically these descriptions could be used as a way of further accessing and understanding the client's view of the world. The 'small world to hide in' immediately describes a motivation from the client's point of view of why he may wish to stay there (to hide from his distress). By exploring the meaning behind the descriptions, cognitive beliefs are likely to be exposed and thus CBT work can be employed.

Furthermore, the visually descriptive use of language can be adapted by exploring with the client how he may wish to 'change' his representations. Angus, Korman and Levitt, (2000)found that that the use of metaphors was particularly beneficial therapeutically when they were changed from the initial generated metaphors of 'being burdened' to a new metaphor of 'unloading the burden'. Therefore the key to therapeutic change was located in the transformation of the original description that was used to describe a clients experience of emotional distress.

In relation to the metaphor of a small world of addiction where the participant hid, one potential way of transforming the metaphor could be to have a 'door with a padlock' on the small world to help the client to stop hiding. This new metaphor can be operationalised into a less abstract concept of strategies the client may employ to 'keep the door locked' at times of difficulties, for example, asking for help when feeling distressed, challenging negative automatic thoughts or using distraction techniques. Therefore, visually descriptive language can be used to access the client's cognitive beliefs whilst also being useful in creating new coping strategies both cognitively and behaviourally.

In relation to behaviour, Young (1999) suggests that a client's behavioural responses that may lead to difficulties (e.g., avoidance or defensive behaviours) are developped as a response to their cognitive schema and are therefore not part of the schema themselves. So, when behavioural responses are played out during EAP (e.g., participant feeling angry and walking away from the horse) these can be

identified, and this may also be a way for the client and therapist to further understand the development of the maladaptive coping strategies that the client has developed over time to manage his underlying schemas.

One key way the CBT can help clients to challenge their unhelpful cognitions and underlying schemas is via the execution of behavioural experiments. These are planned activities that serve to test out a belief that may be causing emotional distress for the client. Behavioural experiments are a vital part of CBT interventions and are seen as crucial to challenging unhelpful schemas and developing new ones (Bennett-Levy, Cooper, Fennell, Hackmann, Rouf, & Westbrook, 2004).

This leads on to the idea of using behavioural experiments as part of EAP. Some participants not only increased their insight into their psychological difficulties but also used the horses to practice new behaviours. These practices served to challenge old beliefs (e.g. 'I will be rejected if I try to communicate with people') and form new ones ('If I can be relaxed with the horse then I can go into the big world an be relaxed when I communicate with other people'). The idea of the horses being a 'stepping stone' seems relevant here. That is, the horses are a middle ground that can be tested out before the client attempts behavioural experiments outside of a therapeutic setting.

It might be argued that CBT has for years used behavioural experiments (without EAP) to challenge beliefs and form new ones. So why do therapists need EAP as well? It seems that as well as being a stepping stone to external behavioural experiments, within the context of being in-patients at the clinic, the horses also offered an opportunity to test out beliefs that could otherwise not be tested until discharge from the clinic.

During and after the 'behavioural experiments' carried out by some of the participants, the horses offered immediate feedback, and by processing this with the therapist as it happened there was an opportunity to learn quickly and develop cognitive changes in a relatively short space of time (compared to traditional behavioural experiments that are commonly reviewed with the therapist the

following week during therapy). Therefore EAP has the potential to offer fast access to cognitions and relatively immediate opportunity to work with the client beliefs.

It could be argued that due to the in-patient nature of the participants' programme, behavioural experiments could be set up with people (not horses) within the clinic and the same immediate effect as mentioned above, might be present. However, one difference lies in the way participants' could argue that people within the clinic are likely to be biased in their feedback during and after behavioural experiments due to the supportive nature of being in an in-patient programme. The horses, however, have no agenda or concern for saying or doing the 'right thing' and thus it may be that their feedback becomes more influential in the process of making cognitive changes.

Bennett-Levy et al. (2004) link the concept of behavioural experiments to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model. They suggest that there are strong similarities between the two due to the cyclical nature of learning in the model and the process by which behavioural experiments are carried out, one experiment leading on to the next.

This idea offers a link between the value of experiential therapy and CBT. Bennett-Levy et al. (2004) suggest that by working both cognitively and behaviourally the client processes the information on two levels. One level being the "deeper implicational (experiential) level" (p.20) and the other being the more conceptual and verbal level. If this is the case then perhaps both hemisperes of the brain are used (as previously discussed) and therefore there is a stronger impact upon the client's development. This idea leads on to the aspect of the present discussion that addresses potential ideas of how therapeutic change might take place during EAP.

4.5 EAP as facilitator of therapeutic change?

The findings of the present study offer different concepts (themes) that may be of therapeutic value to the participants. These include the participants experiencing internal triggers that offer an opportunity to work within the CBT framework. Participants also reported links between their EAP experience and the outside world (relationships and history). This can offer both client and therapist an insight into the client's internal perceptions of the outside world, and facilitate therapeutic work that addresses relationship difficulties. Furthermore, as seen from the analysis, the participants' own themes run throughout their EAP work and these themes serve to highlight important idiosyncratic aspects of the client's distress and psychological struggles.

As can be seen from the above description the themes that arose from the analysis (apart from 'Therapeutic Change') do not in themselves serve to provide therapeutic change. The change appears when a theoretical concept is applied (such as CBT) to the processing and evaluating of the experience.

The findings from the analysis have already been discussed in relation to CBT and potential links to therapeutic change have been made. However, as previously noted, EAP appears to also have strong links to the humanistic paradigm, and to further understand the potential for therapeutic change that EAP offers we need to revisit the humanistic paradigm and its view of psychological change.

From a humanistic point of view, learning (or change) is always experiential and encompasses a process that is embedded in a relational context (Kolb, 1984; Rogers, 1969). That is, without experience, learning cannot take place and this is a process (not content) orientated idea that views the client in relation to others (humans and objects), not as an isolated entity. The experiential aspect of the humanistic paradigm is reflected in Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning.

In Kolb's (1984) model, the main source of human learning is the experiential processes. Although Kolb's model is based on educational learning as opposed to

psychological change, it has been used widely to understand the potential way people learn both within the context of education and psychology. For example, CBT has used the model to facilitate the understanding of how behavioural experiments work (Bennett-Levy et al., 2004).

Kolb's cyclical model includes four interlinked stages of processing. As a reminder, these are the concrete experience (the experience itself), the reflective observation (the client's observation), the abstract conceptualization (the reflective process whereby client makes sense of the experience), and the active experimentation (using new understanding to create further experiments /experiences).

These four stages were implicitly present throughout participants' experience of EAP and are indirectly reflected in Figure 1. Figure 1. is not presented as a 'process model' for EAP in general; it is a representation of the different master themes, related subordinate themes, and the researcher's interpretation of how they interlink. Therefore, caution has to be taken when comparing figure 1 to Kolb's process model. The purpose of the comparison is twofold; to demonstrate the way themes are experienced in a cyclical nature during the analysis rather than on a causal relationship level and to emphasise the link that the analysis presented with the humanistic understanding of psychological growth and change.

The cyclical nature of the thematic analysis is explained as follows. Central to all participants' experiences lay their own thematic experiences of EAP. These idiographic themes influenced and directed the experiences participants had of 'forming a relationship', 'accessing the internal self' and 'experiencing the external world'. Participants appeared to shift from one to the other throughout their three sessions of EAP. An example would be: the presence of the horse causing the participant's experience of being triggered cognitively (accessing the internal self), this would lead to an emotion that related to a previous external experience, potentially a distressing situation (experiencing the external world), this process would then be related back to how the client related to the horse, and how this relationship mirrored his external relationships (forming the relationship).

Following this experience, new cognitions might be triggered and so the cycle continued, moving interchangeably from one theme to the other.

The therapeutic change or learning happened as an amalgamation of the process of fluid movement and overlap from one theme to the other. For example, one participant's therapeutic change happened when he chose to view his perception of the EAP experience differently after processing what the experience might mean to him. Once the participants experienced therapeutic change they either purposefully evaluated their experiences and experimented further or seemingly unknowingly continued in the cycle of EAP experiences.

Therefore, in a less explicit way, participants seem to have worked their way through the experiential learning cycles that Kolb suggested, and this is reflected in the cyclical links between themes.

When discussing Kolb's model, Bennett-Levy et al. (2004) note that despite the vital importance of experience in the process of therapeutic change, no long-term change is likely without every stage of the cycle being carried out. Therefore, in relation to EAP it seems vital to not solely rely on the horses' ability to trigger and mirror client's emotions and behaviours. The therapist's role in processing the experience is vital in order to encourage long-term changes.

The above section of the discussion has mainly focused on the experiential aspect of the humanistic paradigm and its link to EAP. This was discussed using the Kolb (1984) model of experiential learning. However, Kolb's model does not attend to another vital part of the humanistic view of psychological change, that is, the idea of the relationship between client and therapist.

The humanistic paradigm views the relationship between client and therapist as a facilitator of therapeutic change. This idea is based on the qualities within the relationship, such as, an empathic engagement in the client's internal world, sensitivity, congruence and genuine acceptance of the client (Rogers, 1957). These qualities are also known as the 'core conditions' of therapy. By providing an environment within which the client can feel safe and be able to trust the

therapeutic experience is seen as a platform upon which it is safe to take risks and be open to new experiences. The humanistic paradigm suggests that the experience of the relationship in itself can be empowering for clients and facilitate change in itself.

Relating this to the findings in the present study, it is interesting to note how the participants seemed to create their own core conditions through their perceived relationships with the horses. The participants spoke of feeling understood, not being judged, being trusted, and feeling trust towards the horse. In addition, the horses were also seen as being accepting of the participants for who they were. It may be that due to the above clients' perceptions of the relationships between horses and participants, EAP provided a therapeutic space where the participants were able to create their own required therapeutic experience. These descriptions of the relating between horse and participant strongly mirror the humanistic values of a therapeutic relationship. Therefore, it could be argued that the present research offers support to the value of providing the humanistic core conditions within the therapeutic space between client and therapist.

During EAP, the conditions were created, not by a therapist but via the participants' perception of their relationships with the horses. Therefore, the participants seem to have 'designed' the qualities of the horse-human relations to meet their own emotional needs. The apparent emotional needs of the participants' appear to match those ideally provided by a therapist through the humanistic core conditions. Therefore, in relation to therapeutic change during and after EAP, the participant-generated qualities of trust, feeling understood, and not being judged may have been one way that participants experienced therapeutic change to take place.

The CBT view of the therapeutic relationship is that the core conditions as described above are necessary but not sufficient to facilitate psychological change and thus we return as noted several times previously to the importance of the role the therapist plays above and beyond providing core therapeutic values within the relationship.

Overall, therapeutic change seems to be made up of many different aspects within EAP. The cyclical nature of the themes in combination with the idiographic stance needed to understand the client's world, both seem important in facilitating change. In addition, the participants' own perceptions of the horses' behaviours, along with the creation of the core conditions, seems to be another factor in offering the participants a safe therapeutic space from which to make changes. The therapist's role in helping the participants to process their experiences seems to offer the opportunity for more long-term changes and, finally the practical testing out of beliefs and adaption of behaviours in relation to behavioural experiments gives participants a chance to try new behaviours and develop new beliefs about themselves.

4.6 Conclusion

The present study represents an analysis of the little researched area of EAP. The research focused on developing an understanding of the lived experiences of clients who had participated in the therapeutic approach.

The findings suggest that the role of horse-human relationship is of vital importance within EAP work and that the processes of forming this relationship are crucial in informing the therapeutic work between client and psychologist. By using EAP activities to understand and explore the idiographic difficulties, both in-vivo and external to the therapeutic space, the therapeutic work can be enriched and help the client gain further access to a more subconscious level of cognitions and emotions.

The author proposes that further access to underlying beliefs can be gained by engaging with the client in exploration of their use of visually descriptive language

to describe their experiences. This proposal is also informed by research that has noted the more long-term recall of therapeutic experiences from clients who attend therapy that uses metaphor -a type of visually descriptive figure of speech (Cummings, Hallberg, & Martin, 1992).

The relational qualities noted and the use of visually descriptive language both serve as processes that can aid therapeutic change during and following EAP. Furthermore, the idiographic insight that EAP has the potential to provide into the internal world of it's' clients, suggests that the approach has the capacity to uncover aspects of the self that are not immediately accessible to the client. These aspects can be explored and processed with the help of the therapist and this is where the more long-term therapeutic change has the potential to occur. Therefore, the process of being with the horses in itself, offers certain in-vivo experiences that provide immediate benefits of emotional well-being however, change beyond the immediate EAP setting, needs processing with the help of a therapist. Being with the horses and feeling a connection between horse and human, in itself, does not appear to be sufficient.

A particular contribution of the study has been to link a large proportion of the findings to that of hypothesises of efficacy already present in the anecdotal writings of EAP practitioners. The practical flourish of EAP but limited research has been noted as a major concern in the development of the field (Taylor, 2001) and in response to this problem, the present study has offered a link between practice and research that has the potential to begin to bridge the current divide.

4.7 Implications of research for Counselling Psychology

The present research has implications for Counselling Psychology practice that are both theoretically relevant, timely, and appropriate in the current climate of Counselling Psychology.

In relation to this study it is of interest to note the topical focus of the natural world in the most recent edition of *Counselling Psychology Review* (2008, Vol. 23, No. 2). This edition explores the idea of the natural world and our place in it as Counselling Psychologists. Within this issue, Milton (2008) notes the way the natural world is implicitly around us all the time; however, he also notes that as a professional body Counselling Psychology does not directly address the natural world within practice or theory. Indeed Milton reflects on the lack of inclusion of topics about the natural world in the special issue of Counselling Psychology Review (2008, Vol 22, No. 1), in which the working lives of Counselling Psychologists were focused upon.

The author can relate personally to Milton's (2008) query about his awareness and inclusion of the natural world in his life outside of Counselling Psychology practice. However, to where does this interest disappear when we step into our Counselling Psychologist shoes? Innately the author of the present paper believes that there is a professional link to be made to the natural world and reading the special edition of Counselling Psychology review it seems there are other Counselling Psychologists out there that believe the same.

The idea of using the natural world (be it animals, nature or both together) as a resource within Counselling Psychology therefore seems on the edge of awareness for the discipline. The present research teeters on this edge and it feels like it may be part of a new body of research related to the value of the natural world within Counselling Psychology theory and practice.

The findings in this study interestingly reflect and reiterate important values that serve to provide Counselling Psychology with its foundations for practice. For example, the idiographic view of the client is encouraged through EAP work. EAP activities offer the potential to open doors into the internal world of the client, and this facilitates the empathic engagement of the therapist into the client's world. In addition, the therapeutic relationship with the horses that participants described has strong similarities to the Rogerian principles of 'core conditions' and it is interesting to note that these conditions were not provided by a human therapist but *created* by the participants through their perception of the horses. This

suggests a client's desire or need for the presence of the core conditions and therefore supports the Counselling Psychology view that the therapeutic alliance is of extreme importance within the therapeutic processes.

In light of this, EAP seems to draw together vital aspects of Counselling Psychology theory and practice that are both historically important in relation to philosophical underpinnings and up to date with new concepts such as the value of the natural world. By offering the link between historical and current issues in Counselling Psychology, the present study offers a new adjunct therapy that may be viable for future consideration within the practice of Counselling Psychology. Overall, the present research on EAP seems to contribute to the evolutional process of growth and change within the discipline of Counselling Psychology.

Due to its relevance to Counselling Psychology on these different levels, EAP therefore warrants future research, as will be considered in the following section.

4.8 Implications for future research and clinical practice

The present study explored the lived experiences of participants who had had EAP as part of their 3-week inpatient programme for addiction. The purpose of the research was to begin a body of research within the EAP field that could explore participants' experiences and perceived therapeutic changes in relation to EAP.

The themes in the analysis suggested that via the EAP activities the participants were able to access their internal self and link their EAP experiences to their world outside of therapy. In addition, their relationships with the horses were perceived to be of great value both during and after the therapeutic experience. These experiences seem to have facilitated a therapeutic change for clients via different psychological changes such as increased cognitive flexibility and increased self-confidence.

One of the crucial findings was that, despite some strong thematic similarities, the participants brought their own histories (e.g., relationships, childhood, and addictions) to the EAP arena, and these idiographic aspects seem to offer fruitful insights with which client and therapist can work therapeutically.

The thematic findings in the present study were of interest for different reasons. It was interesting to note that they are similar to many of those proposed by EAP practitioners that have not previously been researched, such as the use of metaphors in the EAP experience (extended to visually descriptive language in present research), and the importance of relationships (Karol, 2007). The links discussed previously in relation to these psychological concepts offer strength to the findings and suggest a potential viability to the further practice of EAP.

These findings are useful in understanding how the participants perceived their EAP experience and they can be used to inform future research. However firstly, it is also important to address the present study's limitations.

One of the limitations of the present study is that the research was cross-sectional and not longitudinal. Therefore, the long-term effects (if any) can only be speculated. In addition the participant sample, although appropriately homogeneous and hence in line with conventional IPA methodology, was limited. Its limits lay not so much in the sample size but rather in that, it only explored the experience of participants within an addiction clinic. As previously stated, EAP can be applied to different populations, and therefore the findings for the present study are appropriate only for a small percentage of the potential client population within EAP work. On the other hand, the findings that related to the participant-generated core conditions within the horse-human relationship may suggest that the findings can be generalised on some level. That is, the core conditions are said to be necessary for therapy to flourish regardless of the population with which one is working and thus the findings in the present study may therefore be generalizable to other client groups within EAP practice.

In addition to this study having explored only one type of client group, it also addressed EAP within only one setting. Other addiction programs around the country adopt EAP within the 12-step program. An exploration of other participants' experiences across these clinics may have yielded variations on the themes. However, due to practical limitations such as constraints of time and resources, it was not possible to access the other programs for further participants.

The therapeutic approach adopted by the EAP therapist was not known to the researcher. The present findings have been applied to a CBT framework; however, the actual therapeutic approach employed by the therapist was unknown. It could be argued that this reduced knowledge of the therapeutic approach may have caused the analytic process to 'miss out' certain themes that might have been relevant to the therapeutic processes experienced by the participants. On the other hand, this lack of information could be seen as a strength as it reduced the bias of the researcher. There was no searching for themes that matched the theoretical orientation of the EAP therapist.

Finally, as previously noted, the participants in the present research were inpatients in a 12-step addiction program and therefore their experiences of EAP may have been influenced by their numerous group therapy hours, one-to-one psychology sessions and other therapeutic approaches that were included. Of course, EAP is seen as an adjunct therapeutic approach, so the lines between gain from EAP and gain from the other aspects of the clinics program are difficult to tease out. Given the fact that EAP is usually utilised within the context of a program with numerous types of interventions, it may not be possible to carry out EAP research in the field without the potential of the findings being influenced by the other therapeutic approaches employed in combination with the EAP. This needs to be accepted as a difficulty within EAP research in the future. However, it is possible that as the body of research grows over time, the thematic analysis will begin to overlap across studies and this may serve to offer further understanding of the processes at work particularly during the EAP sessions.

Despite the difficulties with separating the effect of EAP from the effect of the therapeutic program within which EAP is practiced, it may be possible to carry out research in the future that is more in line with traditional experiments. This would require conditions that are, in contrast to the present study, not 'in the field' but in within more controlled conditions separate from EAP within a therapeutic program. This type of experiment could have its own difficulties due to its departure from EAP as it was originally proposed to be used however, it could potentially serve to support the efficacy of EAP and strengthen its' validity depending on the findings.

The limitations described above for the present study offer ideas for further research in the EAP field. In addition, due to the dearth of EAP research, there are numerous future research questions to be attempted in the field. Below are some suggestions.

1. What are the practitioners' experiences of EAP?
2. How might a model of EAP processes be developed?
3. How do participants with different psychological difficulties differ in their lived experience of EAP? How are they similar?
4. Is client age a factor in EAP efficacy?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the participants' experiences of EAP at different addiction clinics?
6. Is there a 'most fitting' therapeutic orientation to use with EAP?
7. What are the participants' lived experiences of EAP six months post therapy?

The first research question –what are the practitioners' experiences of EAP? - aims to explore the experiences of EAP practitioners to further the understanding of the current EAP practitioners' way of using the EAP experiences to facilitate their therapeutic work.

The second proposed question -how might a model of EAP processes be developed? -is perhaps more appropriate long-term when more exploratory work has been carried out. A proposed model (possibly created using Grounded Theory) would provide the next step in the EAP research body as it would allow the

processes within the model to be tested and then either be supported, criticised or expanded upon.

Question 3 -how do participants with different psychological difficulties differ in their lived experience of EAP? How are they similar? – And, question 4 -is client age a factor in EAP efficacy? -address participant variables such as age and psychological presentations. This type of research could further the understanding of which client groups would potentially benefit the most from EAP work.

Question 5 -what are the similarities and differences between the participants' experiences of EAP at different addiction clinics? -is aimed at looking at different experiences of EAP in similar clinics. This research would potentially develop findings that might link certain themes to specific ways a clinic approaches EAP. As EAP is so embryonic in its research, it is important to ascertain how practitioners work with EAP and how this affects the client group. This links to question 6 - is there a 'most fitting' therapeutic orientation to use with EAP? -which would be more quantitative in nature. This question would require outcome studies comparing the measures between client groups that had experienced EAP with therapists of different therapeutic orientations.

Finally, question 7 -what are the participants' lived experiences of EAP six months post therapy. -could offer insight into the long-term effects (if any) of EAP work. The present study suggests some short-term benefits but the longevity of these and how EAP might have affected them is not known.

As can be seen from the above, there are numerous avenues that future EAP research can investigate. The above suggestions are far from an exhaustive list but rather the curiosity of the researcher following the present study's findings. The researcher's interest in the study and the impact this might have had upon the findings is highly relevant for the chosen methodology of IPA but also crucial to Counselling Psychology research. Therefore, the final section of this report will attempt to present a transparent and reflective view of the author's doctoral research experience.

5.0 REFLECTIONS

One of the strengths of Counselling Psychology in the eyes of the author is that of its emphasis upon being a reflective practitioner. The personal awareness and insight that serves to define the Counselling Psychologist researcher and indeed practitioner offers an opportunity to provide transparency to the reader. This is perhaps better described by Finlay (2008)who presents the "phenomenological attitude" to be "understood as the process of retaining a wonder and openness to the world while reflexively restraining pre-understandings..." (p.1). Striking this balance is difficult both in research and in clinical practice; however, the following section will describe the processes by which the author approached this aspect of the present research.

The idea of including the 'self' in a piece of research is exciting and frightening at the same time. Throughout the past three years, the professional training that I have embarked upon encouraged reflection and the idea of an 'internal supervisor' has served me well throughout my struggles with clients, coursework, and research. This internal supervisor was my support and guide during the doctoral thesis.

My interest in EAP developed over time through my own lifelong commitment to and involvement with equestrianism. This personal link to horses served of course as a strong motivator to embark on the present research.

Initially I was concerned that my own experiences of being with horses, riding them, and training them would blinker my ability to empathically engage with my participants' lived experiences of EAP. However, it soon became apparent that there is an enormous divide between equestrianism as a sport and the use of horses therapeutically – in fact, my perception of the divide is continuously growing.

The focus of EAP is on the client and the focus of equestrianism is on the horse. The former is working with the client and the latter is training the horse. Thus, the aim and motivation to engage in these activities is split by the intent of its

participants. So, much to my surprise, my initial fears of over identifying with the participants were unfounded.

One of the strengths of this lack of identification was that I was able to be the reflective researcher who engaged with the participants throughout their interviews. Due to the divide between my experiences of horses and theirs, I was able to maintain the cognitive 'space' internally to remain in the participants' frame of reference and ask questions that did not serve to satisfy my personal curiosity as a rider but rather the interest of the research question.

In addition, apart from attending the 2007 EAP conference I had had limited experience of EAP and was therefore new to the processes of the therapeutic approach, thus I was able to leave the participants in the driving seats as the experts of their own experiences.

Despite the above, of course, the interpretative aspect of IPA is vital to the quality of the research findings and I will now explore how my 'self' might have influenced the research process.

Before embarking upon a career in Counselling Psychology, I was working for a charity that trained assistance dogs for disabled people. I was struck by the therapeutic value that these partnerships provided to the clients. I have been around animals all my life and experienced the therapeutic value of being with animals first hand. The experience of working for the charity led me to the idea that there is a niche for using animals therapeutically, not just practically as within the charity, but in a professional capacity. Hence, the start of my professional psychology career began in an attempt to develop the concept on a professional level.

This experience influenced my belief in the value of using animals therapeutically. Hence, when I was listening to the participants in the present study I was probably sensitive to comments of efficacy and benefit. I noted a sense of disappointment within myself when 'Christian' spoke of the limited benefit he had experienced with EAP. This was a grounding experience and useful for a researcher who deeply

believes that there is scope for using animals therapeutically. It offered the opportunity to reflect upon the idea that, like so many other approaches to therapy, it is worth noting, what approach might work for whom and that not all 'sizes' fit one.

The lack of benefit for 'Christian' highlighted a contrast to some of the benefits other participants experienced and was a helpful balance when reflecting upon the findings. At times trying to tease out the differences between themes was complex and the idea of an internal self and an external world became confusing, as these overlap on a regular basis throughout the research process. This complexity however, led to an interpretative process that deepened the findings. My confusion made me realise that each participant had their own idiographic theme and this was the underlying information that was needed to further understand the internal and external worlds of each participant. Without this analytical struggle, the idiographic themes would not have surfaced.

This process was therefore helpful but it also highlights the infinity of the IPA methodology. The re-visiting of themes and quotes is intense and often left me feeling as if I had missed a vital piece of information out. This leaves an incomplete feeling to the process of the research, I wonder what it would be like to revisit the interviews in several years time when my career has moved on, and I have developed my own experiences and insight into client work in general. This would be an excellent way to tease out the interpreter's actual biases, as of course I am aware that, there are many of my influences within this thesis that are cognitively 'invisible' to me and thus out of reach of the analytic mind.

The approach I have taken to this dilemma of knowing where my 'self' enters the analysis has been to strive for clarity between what was said and what was interpreted from the interviews. I hope this is reflected in the thesis; however, I am also painfully aware that at times I felt so emerged with the data that the distinction between my own thoughts and the participants' words became fuzzy. Perhaps my transparency in this difficulty will help readers to evaluate the findings more appropriately by better understanding the researcher's struggles.

Overall my belief in the therapeutic value of animals has served as the motivator to progress and fight for this thesis. How this will develop in my research and practice in the future is unknown, but the link EAP has been shown to have to Counselling Psychology (as noted previously) provides me with an internal confidence that long term this will not be a concept that vanishes after a few years. It has the potential to grow and evolve into a body of valid therapeutic approaches that are employed by Counselling Psychology professionals in clinical practice.

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Information Sheet

Dear Volunteer,

I am a postgraduate student studying a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at the London Metropolitan University. I am looking for research participants to help me conduct my final year thesis.

You are therefore being invited to participate in a research project that investigates the use of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a therapeutic intervention for addiction treatment. To participate in this study you will be asked to attend an interview at the Sporting Chance clinic, which will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I will be carrying out the interviews. The interviews will be voice recorded.

You will be asked questions about your experience of EAP. I am interested in the sort of things you feel you gained/learnt/experienced from EAP and how this might have happened. If you find any of the questions too difficult to talk about you can decline to answer and there will be no pressure placed upon you.

Please answer the questions you are comfortable with in as much detail as you can. I am interested in your **personal experience** of EAP and will not be asking you about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Sample question you could expect to be asked in the interview:

-Tell me about your experience of EAP.

It is up to you whether you take part. Your decision to decline or participate in the research will in no way impact upon your treatment at the Sporting Chance Clinic. The researcher has no affiliation with the charity and the research is completely independent of the therapeutic programme offered at the Sporting Chance Clinic. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form.

All information you provide will be kept completely confidential. No one except Irene Svendsen will have access to information that could identify you. Access to the interview transcripts will only be available to persons directly related to the project

(Irene Svendsen, Dr. Richards, Dr. Kasket, Dr. Riggs). All interview transcripts and digital recordings will be stored by Irene Svendsen in a secure locked cabinet.

Findings of the study may be published in a journal. If the study is published then extensive scrutiny will be given to any quotes from participants to ensure complete confidentiality and guarantee that no identifying factors are present in the quotes used in the publication of the study.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in this research project.
Regards,

Studying at: London Metropolitan University, Calcutta House, Old Castle Street, London, E1 7NT.

Consent Form

An exploratory study of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as an adjunct therapy – developing a model of psychological processes.

Have you read the information sheet?

Yes/No

Were you given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

Yes/No

Are you satisfied with the answers to your questions?

Yes/No

Do you consider you have received enough information about the study to make your decision?

Yes/No

Do you understand that you are free to decline participation in the study at any point before, during or after the interview process?

Yes/No

You do not have to explain your reasons for withdrawal from the research study and all your information will be duly destroyed.

I understand that all information used for the research will be completely confidential at all times.

Age:

Signature Date

Volunteer ID:

Debriefing

Thank you for taking part in this research project.

You volunteered to take part in a research study that looked at the function of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. The findings of this study will hopefully help to promote the use and understanding of this new therapeutic approach within Counselling Psychology practice.

If any of the material discussed in the interview has caused you any discomfort please do let the researcher know. She will be able to help you access a member of staff at the clinic to support you immediately.

If you have any questions regarding this study, feel free to contact me on the email address below.

Thank you again for your time.

Regards,

Interview schedule

1. When you heard you were going to be working with horses, what did you think and feel about it?

2. Can you tell me about your EAP sessions and talk about what each session was like for you?

Prompt: what sort of emotions did you experience during it?
Did you gain anything from the experience? If so, what?
What was it like to work with a horse?

3. Having completed your EAP sessions, can you now tell me what you feel and think about EAP?

Prompt: What has it been like overall? What is your strongest memory of EAP work?

4. Can you tell me about how the therapist worked with you during your EAP sessions?

Prompts -What was it like for you working with a horse and a therapist at the same time?
- did you notice anything particularly interesting in how the therapist worked with you and the horses?
- how did that make you feel?

5. Can you tell me about your experience of the 'processing group' after each EAP session?

Prompt -what sorts of emotions did you explore?
-What was it like to talk about the EAP session in your group afterwards?
-If anything, what did you learn/understand better about yourself?

6. Can you finally reflect on overall what is has been like to experience EAP as part of your total treatment plan here at the clinic?

Anything else?

ETHICAL ISSUES

Participants will be interviewed after having completed all three of their EAP sessions. At the point of interview participants will not have fully completed their inpatient programme and are therefore potentially a vulnerable population. Issues that may arise are:

I. Despite having completed the specific therapy that the present research wishes to focus upon (EAP), at the time of interviewing; participants will still be patients at the addiction clinic. They may therefore be considered a potentially vulnerable population and at higher risk of distress due to a research interview experience compared to a non-patient population.

II. In relation to recruitment, participants may be more suggestible as they have not completed their inpatient programme and may feel pressured into participating in the research.

III. Participants have only recently completed their EAP programme and have not had a long time period to consolidate the processes experienced. Therefore, previously unexplored issues may appear during the research interviews and potentially expose the participant to an emotionally vulnerable state during and post interview.

Issue I

If we are to consider the proposed study's participant sample as potentially vulnerable, it is worth looking at how other researchers have addressed vulnerability within different types of research. For example, qualitative research with bereaved populations has critical ethical issues to address due to the emotive nature of the topic being investigated. The potential risk of harm is explicit due to the interview questions asking about loss. These may be triggers and result in emotional distress for the participants.

The present research will not be addressing any such emotive subjects however, should the participants experience some form of distress it seems that the most important factor in relation to protection of vulnerable participants is the active use of the researcher's awareness and skillS during interviews. When interviewing a potentially vulnerable participant sample Roosenblatt (2000) suggests extra attention must be paid to being non-judgemental, supporting, knowing when to back off and being aware if something has been misunderstood In relation to bereaved participants. Cook and Bosley (1995) suggest that the interviewer's response style and interview techniques are of utmost importance in relation protection of participants. In their research, Cook et al. (1995) found that the participants reported some the most helpful and supportive qualities of the interviewer to be: 'having empathy, giving understanding, sincerity, showing interest and being non judgemental'.

This idea is echoed by Usher and Holmes (1997) who suggest a non-judgemental stance is especially important for participants with mental health difficulties not to feel stigmatised. Along the same lines, McLeod (1999) suggests that with process research (i.e. with participants being in treatment during time of research) the interviewer needs to employ a collaborative or dialogical research approach which treats participants as co-researchers. This empowers the participants and increases the likelihood of confidence in being able to withdraw from the interview or decline to answer certain questions. This in turn increases the protective factors around a potentially vulnerable sample of participants.

In order to further protect potentially vulnerable participants both McLeod (1999) and Usher et al. (1997) emphasise an awareness and responsibility on the researcher's part to protect the participants. Usher et al (1997) suggest offering to terminate or halt the interview if distress is presented, as well as ensuring therapeutic support is available, throughout the research experience (particularly post interview). He also suggests a time limit for the interviews (e.g. 60 minutes per interview). This is likely to aid with boundaries between participant and researcher and therefore offer further protection to the participant.

Rosenblatt (2000) suggests further precautions that can be taken when interviewing vulnerable participants. Firstly the researcher provides a 'processual consent' (Ramos, 1989; Thorne, 1980). This is done by repeatedly offering participants the opportunity to stop the researcher, the interview or miss out a certain question. Rosenblatt also suggests that the researcher makes decisions to skip relevant questions or move to an abbreviated version of the interview, if the participant is showing signs of distress. By doing this the researcher actually uses her therapeutic skills of observing and understanding the participant's experience within the interview, in order to protect the client and avoid the interview becoming therapy.

McLeod (1999) notes the importance of making clear distinctions between therapy and research when interviewing clients. This is vital also that potentially vulnerable client are aware that the research is not intended to be a therapeutic session and the researcher has no separate agenda away from the interview material. By creating this distinction the participant is further protected by the boundaries being set by the researcher. For the present study, the participants have a set therapeutic time table which will not be interrupted. Interviews will only take place in the participant's free time and therefore immediately create a distinction between therapy and research.

Issue II

In order to obtain truly informed consent and provide potential participants the opportunity to decline participation it is very important to address the recruitment process. Participants in current treatment need particularly careful consideration as they may have concerns about the repercussions of their choices in relation to participation, upon their therapeutic treatment. Secondly there may be issues around a potentially vulnerable participant sample's ability to give informed consent. Stanley, Stanley, Lautin, Kane & Schwartz (1981), looked at the hypothesis that participants with mental health problems were less able to make rational decisions regarding research compared to non patient populations. Stanley et al.

(1981) found this not to be the case. In fact they found no difference between the two groups. This suggests that level of psychopathology may not be a good indicator of patient's ability to make decisions about participating in research.

In an effort to address the issue of participant fear of repercussion upon treatment if they decline participation, Usher et al. (1997) suggest the researcher meets with the participants to encourage trust and provide a chance for the participants to gain truly informed consent by asking questions about the research. This is the time where the researcher would make it explicit that the choice to accept or decline the invitation to participate in the research would in no way affect the therapy received in the clinic. McLeod (1999) furthers this by suggesting the participant is asked for consent at various stages before, during the interview and before leaving the clinic. Furthermore it is possible to provide the participants with the contact of an independent arbitrator if he feels pressured into participating in the research and feels unable to decline directly to the researcher.

Issue III

Rosenblatt (2000) argues that being interviewed about loss can lead to the participant naming a feeling and clarifying their statements. It is suggested that these experiences can be beneficial to a participant rather than necessarily harmful. Cook (1995) looked at the experience of bereaved participants who had previously been interviewed (in a separate study) by another researcher about the topic of their loss. Despite the overall experience being described as 'emotional' it was not described as stressful. This was despite the interviews bringing up emotional issues that had not been anticipated by the participants prior to the interview. In fact, participants reported a selection of benefits from their participation in the original research. These included an opportunity to share their feelings, and a chance to help with research. Some also reported further insight into their loss experience after the interview process despite the initial distress.

In relation to the present study it could therefore be argued that the interview process, although not the aim of the study, may aid processing of the EAP experience and this could have a positive effect rather than negative outcome. Due to the participants being in treatment when the interviews take place they are further protected by having a strong support network of therapists and carers available after the interview experience. Therefore if distress is experienced, the participants will be in a very safe environment. Furthermore, the potential processing of the EAP experiences could be extended into the inpatient treatment programme if the participant feels further compelled to explore these issues beyond the interview.

Therefore in relation to the present study, and in order to address these ethical issues the following action will be taken by the researcher:

Issue I:

- Offer to suspend or terminate interview if distress is presented or participant request's it. *Practically carried out by being aware of affect changes in participant and responding to them by offering to terminate interview.*
- Offer processual consent during interview process.
  Practically carried out by asking the participant if he is 'ok' to continue with the interview during the interview.
- Set a 60 minute time limit to the interviews.
  After 60 min all interviews, participants will be given time to complete their statement and then thanked for their participation – interview will then be terminated.
- Interviews to take place outside of participants' therapy schedule.
  Organised with clinical director who is in charge of participant's therapy schedule.

Issue II:

- Researcher to visit participants prior to interviews to introduce the research topic and to answer any questions.
  Researcher to briefly introduce research and hand out information sheets to all potential participants. Offer time afterwards to answer any questions.
- At point of interview, researcher to revisit information sheet and consent form with each participant prior to interview taking place.
- Contact of independent arbitrator to be offered to participants in case of wishing to withdraw from study at any point in time.
  The supervisory team will fulfil this role. Details of how participants can contact the supervisors will be on the information sheet.

Issue III

- Researcher to ensure availability of on duty therapist in case of distress post interview.
  There is always a therapist on site at the clinic and researcher will liaise with the duty therapist about where to find him/her before each interview commences.

In addition to the above specific provisions, the researcher will aim to be particularly aware of participant' emotional state before, during and after the interviews. In relation to above mentioned research, the researcher also aims to utilise her interview skills to provide a safe and supportive environment with clear boundaries between what is research and what is therapy.

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APPENDIX D

Annotated transcript – Participant 2 - 'Simon'.

Key: comments in lower case represent initial thoughts, ideas and comments on first two readings of transcript. Uppercase comments are the final themes and relevant quote locations within the transcript.

Participant 2 – 'Simon'

R. The first thing I was going to ask you about was: when you knew you were coming here and you heard you were going to be doing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy or EAP what were your initial thoughts about it?

P. To be fair, I didn't know what was going to happen. Until we got there it was completely, I didn't know, I knew we were going to be seeing some horses but eh, I didn't know what I was going there for they didn't explain to us until we got there so when I got there yes...

R. Do you have any previous experiences with horses at all? Or any preconceived ideas about what horses are like?

P. That is my addiction, horses. So yes I have had horses I have had a leg in a horse and eh well like I say it is my addiction so well, I do like horse so...

R.OK

P. But when I got there I thought 'they are taking the micky out of me here' caus it's my addiction and in terms of spending time with horses, it was a bit odd.

R. Can you talk me though, it is three sessions you have had

P. Yes

R. So what I would like you to do it to talk me through each session and tell me what you did what it was like and what sort of feelings came up for you.

P. On the first session I think we had a game of getting to know each other's names, the psychiatrist and the ladies. Then we chose a horse, there were three horses in the field and they insisted on picking a horse. I was last; I didn't have a choice I got one that was given to me. The other boys had already chosen their horses. So then we had to , we were told how to approach a horse and the very sense of the animal they are very clever animals, eh, if you approach them eh gingerly and eh, nervously they will do the same they will back off and eh, there so really they were getting confidence thing and I did that and eh I approached it caus I felt quite comfortable , I had been around horses before and I have had a horse and I approached it how I normally do and they was telling me don't stand in front of the horse caus it doesn't like that and just little bits and pieces. Then eh we cleaned the horse and I felt good in that. I

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Comment [I1]: Meaning of the horse to participant? Perconceived idea of horse as 'bad'?

Comment [I2]: Horse as addiction, feeling like a joke

Comment [I3]: Who are they?

Comment [I4]: No choice, out of control?

Comment [I5]: MIRRORING OF BEHAVIOUR AND INTERNAL STATES

Comment [I6]: Horse copies what participant feels

Comment [I7]: Not too nervous

Comment [I8]: Why? Content/ process? What made him feel good?

felt eh, I felt connected to it and just with the horse. I was talking to it all the time and just gave it a good clean. And cleaning it's hooves and I was, when I done it all the time it felt like I was connected to it then, and I was talking to it, it was a boy, talking to it all the time, I felt good, and that was the first one. The second one we came back the next following Saturday, and eh, we had the choice of horses again and I thought I had picked the same horse again I thought I would pick the same one so I picked...two are similar...I picked the wrong one! So I approached it and it was having none of it. Eh, and I got the raving hump really because he was, I was trying to put this bridle on it and it was having none of it. So I thought, hang on a minute, I had this horse last week and it was beautiful and so calm and I got attached to it, it was having none of it so eh, I was with another partner again and I was angry with myself caus it wouldn't do as it was told, and I felt confident in the morning going up to it and it was having none of it. Well, that's life I think cause it could have slept funny it could have had no sleep and but I was angry I thought, well....I walked away from it. Somebody else had a go and they failed, then one of the ladies who, I don't know if they are her horses and that, they tried and they failed so I felt a bit better cause everybody was trying and failing. Then one of the boys who had already had previously had a horse I took off from him and took his horse over and the lady horse. He tried and he failed, so I thought oh well, he's not that good anyway, so they all went, I watched them for a bit and they all had a meditation on the horse, four of them. I had not...I wasn't one of them, I mean I took over the lady horse, it's a grey horse, and I cleaned that and I got attached to that and I felt confident and I was talking to her and just felt like it was like a big baby, melted in my hand, and just talking to her and I felt this horse is listening to me 'caus when I turned away it nudged me and I thought oh he wants me to keep cleaning it, it was just so relaxed and it cocked its leg up like it was going to sleep at one stage. Then we had a game of two people blind folded and myself taking them around the course and obstacle course, and eh, just, you would ask each of the people how did it feel me taking them round the course so that was the second week and this week, eh they was in the field before they had always been separated with a fence around them but this week they weren't they were just in the field so... I think we got there a bit early so we just approached the horse we wanted to approach and with the thing we just put it straight on, I just put it straight on to the horse, so relaxed and off I went, jogged around the field with it, made it jump over a fence, like a little fence, in and out of the cones, cleaned it, and I felt good. Hm...

R. which horses was that, today?

Comment [I9]: Connecting with the horse – physical? Emotional?

Comment [I10]: Constantly talking

Comment [I11]: Wanting to repeat previous success

Comment [I12]: Anger

Comment [I13]: Rejection from horse

Comment [I14]: Triggering emotions

Comment [I15]: Conflict between internal emotions and the reaction of the horse

Comment [I16]: He rejects the horse

Comment [I17]: Not so alone

Comment [I18]: FORMING A CONNECTION

Comment [I19]: This process seems quick. Got horse, got attached.

Comment [I20]: BEING AT ONE

Comment [I21]: Confidence is quickly regained

Comment [I22]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I23]: Use of language is very visually descriptive.Image of horse as gentle and easy to control (melted) – becomes part of the horse- as one?

Comment [I24]: Felt the horse listening, how? What told him it was listening? Feeling heard

Comment [I25]: Being needed

Comment [I26]: Very matter of fact way of speaking about it. Done with ease/pleasure?

P. that was the one I had the first week.

R. so you got back to the one you had first...

P. Yes

R. If I can just take you back to the first week, eh you were saying you kept touching it you always had a hand on it, and you felt, I think you used the word 'a connection', can you tell me a bit more about that, what does that mean to you, the connection what was it about it that was good?

P. I just, it just felt good. When I was just cleaning it and it was, I was talking to it, I was communicating with it. Alright, that has been my problem in life, not communicating with people and just putting my, as I say my shield up and running and hiding under my addiction. I have learnt that in here, to put it down and just relax and communicate more and that is what I did I practiced on the horse really and I could see me and I could see the horse had listened to me, listening and well his ears were pricked and I felt good I mean know he can't answer me I was just telling him how good it was and how wonderful what a day it was and just like that just talking to him and if anyone could see me they probably think I'm a mad person, but I was just getting vibes back for me and it was good vibes, like, this so relaxes the horse and I wish all people who I speak to could relax and listen to me and whatever, and it was, yeah it was a good, I felt good.

R. that idea of you putting up the barriers and that being your pattern if you like, when you were working with the horse and stroking and patting it were you aware of what was happening or is what you are telling me now something that has kind of come to you later, the idea of that is what communicating and talking...

P. eh, well I suppose the psychiatrist asked towards the end of the session, I said, 'that was so good' and I felt relaxed and he said 'yeah, these horses are very clever people', he said,' they know what is going on' and he said they can hear everything and they can see what's going on and they can just tell, if you approach it now they can just tell, and yeah it just felt, I felt really connected to the horse. Really did and I was trot...I went, I was full of, eh, what is the word I am looking for? Just so chuffed on top of the world really, that I had done a horse and a big powerful animal like that could be so relaxed well if the horse can relax then I can go into the big wide world and relax with other people and communicate better and it did and I got better all the time I have been in here, to communicate with people and not just run and hide...

Comment [I27]: EAP processes seem to provide positive emo's.

Comment [I28]: RELATIONSHIP COMPARISONS

Comment [I29]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I30]: Communication via speaking

Comment [I31]: Life problems being reflected in EAP?

Comment [I32]: Visually descriptive language to express addiction difficulties.

Comment [I33]: MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Comment [I34]: Awareness of alternative behaviour

Comment [I35]: Practicing new skills on horse

Comment [I36]: MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Comment [I37]: External view of self?

Comment [I38]: Feeling heard-*needing* the horse to listen? And feeling good because of this perception?

Comment [I39]: MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Comment [I40]: Vibes from horse especially for Simon – feeling special? Meeting emotional needs?

Comment [I41]: The horse provides what Simon needs from humans. Also, a sense of reciprocity of 'vibes' and one making the other feel good.

Comment [I42]: SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Comment [I43]: Part of the horse? As one?

Comment [I44]: ...trotting?

Comment [I45]: Visually describing how he feels

Comment [I46]: RELATIONSHIP COMPARISON

Comment [I47]: Size and strength of horse seems important here

Comment [I48]: INCREASED SELF CONFIDENCE

Comment [I49]: Horse symbolising Simon? If he can do it then so can I...

Comment [I50]: Use of descriptive language – real world as big

Comment [I51]: Practice with horse increased confidence. Relaxing with horse [1]

Comment [I52]: Overall for the clinic not just EAP?

Comment [I53]: Aware of his previous unhelpful behaviours

R. So sort of almost like a practice, is it?

P. Well I thought of it like a practice, it could have been because I know they are not talking back to me but I could sense it was listening, and before I wouldn't even try to communicate with anybody, I just think ' oh they won't listen' or whatever, I didn't want to go and tell them my problems or I just thought I would run and hide and go to my gambling addiction my addictive thing and before I know it I was lost and my world was, I was lost in my own little worried world and as I say I have learnt that even when it is communicating with the horses, just to relax and communicate and life is much easier.

R. The second session, you mentioned the word anger, tell me about that, it's quite a different word to the feelings you had in the first session.

P. I thought I had picked the same horse as I said earlier and eh, I thought, the week before I felt top of the world and eh I thought , 'I am looking forward to this today' and get my horse and have a trot around. Give it a nice clean, but it wasn't having none of it and just the anger inside and ...I'm not going to swear but I thought, 'why is it doing this? Why is it doing this to me?' then, I didn't know why it was doing it to me, then I had a chat with the psychiatrist and he said, 'look Simon, it's not you probably, caus they have tried and they have tried, he's probably had a think about it and it's like a human being, he could have had a bad night's sleep, he could have something on his mind'. Animals they do, and I thought, 'well he is right, yeah he could have had a bad night's sleep or could have something on its mind or whatever' and that really took me like, well yeah, instead of jumping to conclusions and think 'geez what am I doing here' and feeling angry and putting the barriers up again, 'woo Simon, just step back and think what you are doing'. There must be a reason for it. Instead of shouting or whatever and that is what I probably do before when I was without, even before I came in here I'd just get mad and get angry and again when I go into my own little world well he said 'no Simon there must be something wrong, it's not just you caus you had a go, she's had a go and so it's not you its saying 'no' to everybody'. And that is what I got out of that little session, like people who have got things on their mind, could have lost their job that day, and I could have come to them for a promotion and try to speak to them and them going 'well...' and instead of saying anything back to them just say 'all right you don't want to speak to me I'll speak to you when you want to speak to me.' And that is what I learnt at that session. It was good.

Comment [I54]: RECIPROCAL PROCESSES OF RELATING

Comment [I55]: Are these his own emotional needs being met?

Comment [I56]: Aware of previous behaviours

Comment [I57]: Automatic negative thought

Comment [I58]: Expecting rejection?

Comment [I59]: Visually descriptive language helps client to express the depth of despair he experienced

Comment [I60]: Practice of communication has increased his insight.

Comment [I61]: Making a bond with the horse and then feeling cheated? Dissapointment/ rejection.

Comment [I62]: Awareness of emotional reaction to perceived rejection

Comment [I63]: Triggering thoughts of personal attack.

Comment [I64]: Horses seen as humans

Comment [I65]: Helping client to see alternative answers

Comment [I66]: Visually descriptive language again

Comment [I67]: INCREASED INSIGHT

Comment [I68]: Developing new behaviours and cognitions. A process of internal dialogue to address the situation.

Comment [I69]: COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

Comment [I70]: Awareness of previous behaviour

Comment [I71]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I72]: Choice of language – addiction world is small the real world is big. Addiction world versus the horse world – horse world as representation of real world?

Comment [I73]: Seeking alternative answers following the experience of feeling rejected

Comment [I74]: Applying to outside world and potential future issues

R. It sounds like when you started it was really hard for you to start with and the anger...was it triggered quite quickly, the way you talk about it it sounds like it came quite quickly...

P. yeah, it did come quickly caus I was trying, I was trying to get this thing on it and eh, it kept nodding it's head and didn't want to do it and I thought I got it on it and he got it caught in his mouth and then he was not having it and then he was just nodding his head away and was swooshing his tail as in 'look I am not interested, get away from me' and it kept trying and to walk off, I thought I would walk with it and say 'look calm down' trying to put it on again and it walked the other way and just walking away from me. I was then getting more and more angry and thought 'what the f's he doing' I tried to give it to somebody else to try and they failed and I was speaking to the psychiatrist just said, look he explained to me and then I thought, 'ok, could be', and he said that is what happens to humans as well, it does, if you have not had a good night's sleep or you have some bad news then you, and I thought, 'yeah it is true, you don't just fly off the handle, just take a deep breath and relax' and that is what I have learnt about that as well, yeah hm

Comment [I75]: Giving the horse a voice. Participant's own perception of the horses behaviour

Comment [I76]: Communication in response to horse's behaviour

Comment [I77]: Anger being triggered again.

R. After that did you do engage with the horse at all during the second session or was that kind of the full second session? Was there anything else after that experience?

Comment [I78]: New and alternative behaviour to deal in the moment with his distress. Does this link to Daytn's idea of addictive behaviour often being linked to emotional illiteracy? Client is learning how to understand and deal with his emotions via EAP.

P. No I said I went on to another horse and the lady, it was the grey horse and yes that was just like putty in my hands again, there talking to her, being there and yeah felt good, walked it round, and I think Jake was upset more in that session ...one of the lads, and I could see him upset and I just walked up to him with the horse and it followed me. And I said 'you alright' and something came to him and he didn't want to speak to anybody but just glad I went up to him and said, 'you ok?' it was like taking a little dog for a walk, and this powerful animal is coming with me. And it was just, hm, look at me I have got this beautiful animal, a tonne of weight and 'come on' off we went it was good, I just felt connected to it.

Comment [I79]: BEING AT ONE

Comment [I80]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I81]: Use of language – easily controlled? Gives an image of child's play due to the word 'putty'

Comment [I82]: BEING AT ONE

Comment [I83]: Being in control?

Comment [I84]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I85]: Apparently easy

Comment [I86]: Being at one with the horse? Connection has a sense of physicality to it. Like a team. The horse seems to represent power. The horse's power is internalised in the client? 'A tonne of weight' and the client could control this weight. Is this what makes the client (and other clients) 'feel good'?

R. so you got back to where you were that feeling of connectedness...

P.yes,

R. and then if you can tell me a bit more about the third week, today,

P. today yeah, today, we turned up, all the horses were in the field and like we had the bridles given to us and that and it was like, 'get your horse' and I went, I knew which one to go for, the first one I

Comment [I87]: More confident than the first week , making a choice about what horse he would like to work with and not waiting to be told. Increased self confidence? More able to take responsibility?

had the first week. Went up to it and had a little stroke e and eh, I just gelled with it and just put the thing on me and another lad got the mane on and cleaned and took it for a little walk, took it, tied up cleaned it, took it round a bit, jogged a fence it was easy. So yeah, good,

R. Jumping the fence, was that something you were asked to do? Or something you did yourself?

P. It was yeah, she said just take it over the fence and in and out the cones, so we did that. It did stop eh and eh I thought, 'oh, ok' and she did say the lady said to us, 'this one is a bit temperamental' and it does stop and if you look back, if you keep looking back it knows you have won, so just look ahead and see, so, I was doing that a few times and it didn't come with me and I thought 'oh', then said, just do this and she told me what to do and off we went again. So yeah...

R. So were you not, there was no rope, were you leading it with a rope?

P. yes there was a rope.

R. So was there anything you could take from today's session?

P. Eh, not as much as the first two no. The sessions was just, well went there and cleaned them. And that's, yeah, cleaned them and took them for a bit of exercise really. Yeah, not as much as the first two sessions. But yeah I enjoyed it, it was good.

R. the eh, therapist who was working with you, how did he fit into the whole picture?

P. he didn't do anything very much, he just walked about on the first week and just watched how we approached and eh, just take it for a walk, walk it and then he watched us do that blind fold thing with the partners to give them confidence and eh, then he just took that, gave me some instructions to take two lads eh, in and out of the cones and eh, me giving instructions so they were relying on me really. Then change over and he just telling us to do that and he was just watching us. And he just, on the second week, I went up to him and said, 'look', well he saw me, he said, 'how are you feeling now?' and I said, 'I'm angry, really angry' he said why, 'tell me why you are feeling angry', 'caus he won't do as he is told' he said, 'ok, ' so somebody else had a go and he said, 'look, he's failed ' and someone else had a go and these animals they are clever animals and they are temperamental and he said, he explained, and it was good and I just took it all in I think, yeah he is quite right, it's just like life. I am repeating myself, but people can get out of bed and not

Comment [I88]: Use of visually descriptive language. Again a sense of becoming one and joining/ merging with the horse.

Comment [I89]: No longer struggling with the horse, no longer feeling rejected.

Comment [I90]: Reaction here is a contrast to initial feeling of rejection from the horse. Has the previous EAP experience made the client more resilient to potential challenges?

Comment [I91]: Less therapeutic and more about enjoyment of being with the horse. No activities? What was the therapist doing?

Comment [I92]: Therapist's role here seems to be observing and letting clients do their own work. Would I have wanted to be more involved with the client's journey than this therapist seemed to be?

Comment [I93]: Feeling trusted

Comment [I94]: Processing experiences with the client

Comment [I95]: Triggering emotions and cognitions.

Comment [I96]: EAP like life. Interesting how the horses can represent another person in life but also life overall. The horses and EAP is used to suit the client's emotional needs (e.g. being in control) and also to interpret and understand own idiographic difficulties in life.

have a good night's sleep, or had a phone call from family saying they are very ill or whatever, it's like I say, when you approach them if they are offish with you, there is probably a reason not because they don't like you or whatever, cause it's true about life, really isn't it. So instead of thinking 'oh, fuck, piss off then' or whatever, put my shield up again and then off to the pub or the bookies, say 'ok, those people don't want to speak to me and don't want to open up to me and tell me what is wrong' or I say to myself, 'oh ok' and shove them away, he or she probably needs help, so I may say, 'do you what to talk about it or not?' and if they say they don't want to talk about it then ok fine. When you want to talk about it I am there for you. Instead of saying 'argh, sod off' so that is what I got out of that session.

R. The second session sounds really quite important.

P. Yeah it was good yeah

R. did you have any time after you had finished was there any talking in a group about what was going on, or speaking to the therapist some more?

p. not today, caus the therapist wasn't there today the main therapist so, but the first meeting he said, how do you feel with the animal, I told him that I wasn't looking forward to coming here because of my addiction, and that is why, he said, 'how do you feel now?' I said, 'I feel on top of the world' I said 'it is not their fault I have lost a lot of money; I was blaming them before I got there,

R. right

P. and at the end of the day I said, 'they are beautiful animals and it's not their fault they have lost me, it is not the horses that I have backed. And that was in my mind that was my attitude when I got there, wrong attitude I know that but that was the way I felt, what I am doing, I'm going to see horses, my addiction, it's like the lads have got AA problems, it's like going to a pub with them. So, but when I got there and got into it, yeah I felt good.

R. So what changed your 'attitude' you said that when you went there/

P. caus of my addiction

R. yeah, so what changed it?

P. oh, as I said it is not their fault. I am blaming them before I, they had done anything to me, I just thought quite negative, just to say, well it is not their fault, not the horses what I have backed, it's

Comment [I97]: COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

Comment [I98]: UTILISING VISUALLY DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Comment [I99]: Life overall. Finding alternative ways of interpreting the same situation

Comment [I100]: Language use – visual metaphor for addiction – shield. So addiction seen as a way of protecting the client from difficulties inlife.

Comment [I101]: Generating alternative responses both cognitively and behaviourally.
'I am there for you' – a very caring statement – linked to the experience of the horses being there for him? Listening to him.

Comment [I102]: Language use again

Comment [I103]: Taking responsibility for own actions. Changes leading to therapeutic change? Creating an internal locus of control?

Comment [I104]: Insight and reflective processes. Ability to say something was 'wrong'.

Comment [I105]: The client has to allow himself to engage with the processes of EAP if not then no perceived benefit. Interesting how this statement is often repeated – I felt good – participant seems unable to express this in more detail.

Comment [I106]: Able to be reflexive and understand difficulty with previous cognitions.

nobody else's fault I have backed horses, it is my fault. Nobody has asked me to put money on these horses and that is what I have realised now; no one has twisted my arm and said I have to go and put £50 on that bet or £100 on that. No one has done that to me. My addiction, I thought, 'just think what you are doing, Simon', and it just like taking a...breathe, and take a deep breath and think well what are you doing. These are nice animals, like any animals lovely; don't take it out on them. You know I have got a dog at home, and I lost £500 one day and I shouted at the dog. It's not the dog's fault that I have lost £500, and that is what I thought, after two sessions really. After the first one, it's not their fault, it's like again, people, out in that big world, it's not their fault that I have lost money, or have had ten pints of lager and getting abusive and get arrested, it's not their fault, it is my fault. And that is what I have learnt in these, in this. It's been good.

Comment [I107]: Developing an internal locus of control

Comment [I108]: Learning alternative behaviour – making changes. Stepping back to review situation

Comment [I109]: Changes can happen quickly with EAP?

Comment [I110]: Horses as people

Comment [I111]: Use of visual ly descriptive language

Comment [I112]: Internal locus of control – self as in control of mistakes? Self as responsible.

R. Overall, as part of your EAP and that is part of your whole treatment here, can you just tell me a little bit about how you see EAP as part of the treatment or separate from the main treatment. How does it all fit together?

P. Well, I think it is just learning how to deal with different things. When I go into the public, it is like they are animals, they can't answer you back, they can do actions and be quite set in their way or whatever, and that is what I have learnt, they are only animals and like humans are bit eh, they can talk to you a bit more, but I felt I, think communication, that is the main thing since I have been in here, trying to communicate, even with animals. Animals understand you, it's like a dog you say fetch or whatever, they learn, these animals are not stupid, I suppose the advantage with the horses is that they are quite clever. They get their own state of minds like a human, that is what I have learnt. Hm...

Comment [I113]: Self as active agent in change and managing difficulties.

Comment [I114]: People as animals. Not so frightening now? Using skills learnt in EAP to apply to fears in the 'big world'.

Comment [I115]: COMMUNICATION

Comment [I116]: Communication as participant's idiographic theme?

Comment [I117]: MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Comment [I118]: Feeling understood. Animals meeting his emotional needs because they cannot contradict his projections upon them?

R. OK, I have asked all the questions I had, is there anything about EAP or anything about your experience with the horses that worth talking about now, that we haven't touched on? Anything that springs to mind for you?

P. No well what I will do when I get out of here I am going to carry on, well start looking for going to the local horse place and then say can I come down and still do horses. So I am not going to bet on horses but I know it is my addiction but I thought well I am getting something out of this and just cleaning the horses like dealing with the animals and communicate with them. I feel I can communicate with them. That is all. I will just give it a try and do a bit with horses...

Comment [I119]: Wanting to be with horses as part of recovery. No need for a therapist? So not EAP as such? 2 sides to EAP the experience of being with the horse and the therapeutic intervention of processing EAP activities and resulting emotions, cognitions and behaviours.

Comment [I120]: In what way? Emotionally, verbally, behaviourally?

328 R. That is interesting that the horses are your addiction and it is
329 almost like you are finding another way of engaging with them

330 P. Yeah, hm, I don't want to bet on the horses, caus it has been a lot
331 of trouble, drinking that has been giving me a lot of trouble as well,
332 as long as I can keep not doing them two things eh, just think, if they
333 come to mind, I don't want to think about it but if it does I know at
334 the back of my mind I don't want to have them in my mind but I
335 know I will go back to what I was before. I can still, like going to a
336 pub, I can still go to a pub and have a coke cant I, so I thought I have
337 enjoyed doing this, with these horses, and I thought I will carry on
338 doing it. So, that is what I am going to do.

339 R. Ok, thank you very much for your time.

Comment [I121]: Self as still vulnerable but increased insight into difficulties.

Comment [I122]: Doing part of the activity that he is 'allowed'? Horses as similar to drinking addiction as they represent his gambling addiction. Remaining engaged in activities that could lead to addiction (pub and horses) but remaining in control of his behaviour.

Example of a group Equine Assisted Psychotherapy activity.

Title: Life's obstacles

Designed to address the following potential issues:

Teamwork, communication, problem-solving, relationships, leadership, overcoming challenges, boundaries, attitude, impulse control, expectations, and identification and healthy expression of emotions.

Setting up the activity:

Poles and cones are placed randomly in the arena, prior to clients' arrival. One or more horses can be used for this activity.

The activity:

At the beginning of the session, clients are asked to set up obstacles within the arena and identify each obstacle as a meaningful personal metaphor for something that causes them distress (substance abuse, emotional detachment, difficult memories, relationship difficulties etc.).

Clients are then asked to try to get the horse/s to traverse the obstacles without touching or bribing them.

Processing following the activity:

All client decisions, actions and reactions during the activity to be processed verbally with the psychologist at the end of the task.

Activity as described by Lancia (2008).

Abbreviations used throughout the thesis

AAT – Animal Assisted Therapy

The use of any type of animals within therapeutic settings.

EAP – Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

The specific use of horses in therapeutic experiential activities to generate psychological benefit for clients with psychological difficulties.

EAET –Equine Assisted Experiential Therapy

Another type of EAP where the therapeutic model adopted by the practicing psychologist is specifically based on experiential learning as opposed to other therapeutic orientations such as CBT or psychodynamic schools of thought.

IPA- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

A qualitative research methodology interested in the interpretation of the participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon.

CBT –Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

A therapeutic approach that deals with people perceptions of events and their related cognitions, behaviours, feelings and physiological reactions.

EAGALA –Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association

Organisation founded in 1999 that is now the main supporter and educator in the field of EAP.