EXPLORING EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

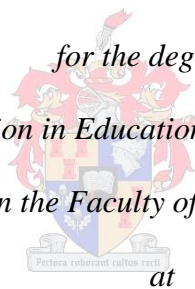**by**

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The background experiences of adolescents removed from their families and placed in residential care are often characterised by trauma, abuse and neglect, resulting in significant psychological and developmental implications. However, as a result of their negative past experiences, many of these individuals view other people, including helping professionals, with mistrust or apprehension, influencing their openness to and thus the effectiveness of traditional psychotherapeutic interventions. Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is explored within this study as an alternative non-invasive approach which aims to meet the emotional and developmental needs of vulnerable and difficult-to-reach adolescents. Innate characteristics of horses seem to encourage individuals to engage fully in the psychotherapeutic process making them well-suited to the role of co-therapist within the therapeutic team. This study aimed to explore the experiences of adolescents living within residential care who had participated in an EAP program for approximately eight months, and the affects their participation had within their lives.

A qualitative study founded within the interpretive paradigm was used to gain insight into the research questions. Participants were selected using purposive and convenient sampling techniques. Following this, data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, the researcher's reflective journal, and a focus group discussion. Inductive data segmentation and reassembling techniques were utilised to analyse the data. The findings were integrated and presented as a case study.

The research findings indicated that the participants experienced various learning and development opportunities through their participation in EAP. They were able to establish connections which led to improved psychological, social, and physical well-being. The implicit integration of the Circle of Courage principles of mastery, belonging, generosity and independence within the EAP process was also explored and documented for the first time within this text. The findings were related to resilience theory in order to depict EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach which serves to foster resilience for vulnerable adolescents, namely those placed within residential care in this study.

Keywords: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, adolescents in residential care, vulnerable adolescents, the Circle of Courage, resilience

OPSOMMING

Die agtergrond ervaringe van adolessente wat verwyder is uit hul ouerhuise en in residensiële sorg geplaas is, word dikwels gekenmerk deur trauma, mishandeling en verwaarlosing, met beduidende gepaardgaande sielkundige - en ontwikkelingsimplikasies. Voortvloeiend uit hul negatiewe ervaringe van die verlede, is dit moeilik vir sommige van hierdie individue om ander mense, en dit sluit professionele mense in die hulp-professies in, te vertrou en sonder bedugtheid te benader. Dit beïnvloed hul openlikheid en dus die effektiwiteit van tradisionele psigoterapeutiese intervensies. Perd-ondersteunde psigoterapie (Equine Assisted Psychotherapy, EAP) word ondersoek in hierdie studie as 'n alternatiewe, nie-indringende benadering, waarvan die doel is om die emosionele - en ontwikkelingsbehoeftes van weerlose en moeilik-bereikbare adolessente mee aan te spreek. Dit wil voorkom asof ingebore eienskappe van perde individue aanmoedig om ten volle deel te neem aan die psigoterapeutiese proses, en dit maak die perde baie geskik om as hulp-terapeute op te tree binne die terapeutiese span. Hierdie studie beoog om die ervaringe van adolessente in residensiële sorg, en wat vir agt maande deelgeneem het aan 'n EAP program, te ondersoek, sowel as die effek wat hierdie deelname op hul lewens gehad het.

'n Kwalitatiewe studie gebaseer op die interpretatiewe paradigma is gebruik om insig te verkry in die navorsingsvrae. Deelnemers is geselekteer deur doelgerigte - en gerieflikheidstegnieke te gebruik. Hierna is data verkry deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, die navorser se reflektiewe joernaal en 'n fokusgroep onderhoud. Induktiewe data segmentasie en hersamestellingstegnieke is gebruik om die data te analiseer. Die bevindinge is geïntegreer en aangebied as 'n gevallestudie.

Die bevindige van die studie dui aan dat die deelnemers verskeie leer- en ontwikkelingsgeleenthede ervaar het deur hul deelname aan EAP. Hulle was in staat om konneksies te maak wat bygedra het tot sielkundige, sosiale en fisiese welsyn. The research findings indicated that the participants experienced various learning and development opportunities through their participation in EAP. Die implisiete integrasie van die beginsels van die 'Circle of Courage', naamlik bemeestering, behoort aan, ruimhartigheid en onafhanklikheid, is binne die EAP proses ondersoek en vir die eerste keer in hierdie teks gedokumenteer. Die bevindinge is vergelyk met veerkragtigheid teorie om EAP as 'n psigoterapeutiese benadering te beskryf wat veerkragtigheid aanmoedig by weerlose

adolessente, naamlik dié wat in residensiële sorg geplaas is en aan hierdie studie deelgeneem het.

Sleutelwoorde: Perd-ondersteunde psigoterapie, adolessente in residensiële sorg, weerlose adolessente, Circle of Courage, veerkragtigheid

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

I love horses. I've been a horse-rider since I was young and attribute a great part of who I am today to my experiences with these incredible animals. In addition, I love people, and have a very special passion for working with vulnerable children and youth. Over the years I have not only experienced for myself but, have also heard and read countless stories about the magic between horses and humans, and the healing possibilities that can arise from this mysterious relationship – one which we are only beginning to understand. My curiosity was awakened, as well as my belief that within these stories lay something '*real*', something that could possibly be of much value to those in need of an alternative to the realities in which they are currently and constantly engulfed – a way out. I believe that horses can carry us out of our darkness.

"There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man."
Winston Churchill

However, passion is not enough, or so I thought. Even though the link between the healing powers of horses and psychology was so very clear to me, I kept forcing myself back into the world of, what I believed to be, the '*academic*'. I spent countless hours swinging many potential thesis topics back and forth, considering everything *but* that which was most meaningful to me. I never reached any conclusions – until, I heard other Masters students expressing their growing disinterest of their research topics. I knew I would never be able to complete something I wasn't passionate about and this gave me the courage I needed to pursue my interest further. The decision was made. I would focus on Equine Assisted Psychotherapy – EAP.

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy involves the use of horses as part of the therapeutic team, as co-facilitators in the learning process (Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, & Bowers, 2007). It is an experiential, "hands-on" methodology, which falls under the animal assisted therapies umbrella (Ewing et al., 2007, p.60). An EAP approach includes arranging activities involving horses which allow for the development and application of certain skills, such as verbal and

non-verbal communication, assertiveness, creative thinking, problem-solving, leadership, responsibility, teamwork, relationships, confidence, and attitude (Rothe, Vega, Torres, Soler, & Pazos, 2004).

I put aside my *'true-life'* story books and went searching for the academic in EAP. I didn't expect much but I was amazed at what I found. EAP was not the alternative, *'way-out-there'* approach which I believed, but rather one that is widely recognised, utilised, and researched. I found articles, from for example, the USA, Serbia, Spain, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom documenting successful interventions for individuals experiencing a wide assortment of difficulties – Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly: "Equine therapy for some extended stay patients"; "Utilizing equine-assisted therapy to treat eating disorders"; "Equine-facilitated learning for youths with severe emotional disorders"... "for Autistic children"..., "for grieving children"..., "for children who have experienced intra-family violence", the list can go on (Christian, 2005; Dimitrijević, 2009; Rothe et al., 2004; Worms, 2009). Fantastic! It's not only a select group of *'hippies'* who are using horses for healing – this is a recognised psychotherapeutic approach being used all around the world!

But, why, if there are so many texts raving about the effectiveness of EAP, have I not heard of this in South Africa? And so began my search for South Africa-based literature regarding EAP. I found very little. I then searched for EAP therapy centres in South Africa. Again, I found very few, and only five in the Western Cape. I was now desperate to find out more. What do they do there? Is it really as effective as it is made to seem in the articles I had read? I wanted to know about anything and everything related to EAP.

In, what I believe to be a fateful act, I contacted Lisa Baley (pseudonym) at the EAP centre closest to my home: The Centre (pseudonym). I was welcomed into a world of love and warmth, surrounded by people who had made my passion their life. Baley confirmed what I had read – EAP does not yet feature within the repertoires of our psychologists and helping professionals (A. Baley, personal communication, July 21, 2011). According to her, this is something very new in the South African context. So little is known about it here – there are minimal therapy centres or training courses. Therefore, professionals, if not completely unaware of it all together, are reluctant to incorporate it into their practices.

Baley also reiterated the important role of EAP as an approach for working with vulnerable youth, the primary population group served at The Centre (A. Baley, personal communication, July 21, 2011). As a non-talk, non-invasive form of psychotherapy, it has

been suggested as being better suited than traditional approaches for those individuals whose ability to trust has been violated (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.). Many adolescents with challenging backgrounds view therapists with mistrust or apprehension, influencing their openness to and thus the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions. According to Ewing et al. (2007), EAP may serve as an alternative method to meeting the needs of these youth as horses may open the door to establish the trust needed in the therapeutic process. People may shun physical and emotional closeness but often can accept that from the sensitive, gentle nature of a horse. Thus horses can provide a vehicle through which the therapist can relate to the client and facilitate the learning of various essential coping and life skills (Rothe et al., 2004). Further, Baley also mentions the powerful influence of working experientially within a natural environment which, together with the calming effects of being surrounded by animals and the love and empathy received from the therapeutic team, appears to assist in the creation of a safe and nurturing place in which individuals can feel comfortable to explore their past and present experiences and realities (A. Baley, personal communication, July 21, 2011).

It is my aim to use this research as a vehicle to further an understanding of the nature and effects of EAP, and to generate awareness of this meaningful albeit alternative psychotherapeutic approach, particularly for relevant professionals. I also hope to contribute to current South African-based literature on EAP, in which there appears to be a gap in the research.

After spending some time at The Centre prior to the data collection period, I wanted to understand more, not only about EAP, but also about the individuals I was interacting with at the stables – those placed within residential care. How did they come to be removed from their homes and families? What could the effects of this be? What does residing in a home actually mean – literally, and experientially? I set out to review the literature in this regard. I came to the realisation, one that in hindsight is very obvious, that each case is entirely unique and there are a multitude of answers for my burning questions. However, one common thread which seems to connect individuals in care is that of trauma, in a range of forms, and with a wide variety of resulting social, emotional, behavioural and physical consequences.

The traumatic experiences typical amongst children and adolescents in residential care include abuse and neglect, exposure to violence, and exposure to parental substance abuse (Edleson, 1999). This is often complicated by co-occurring risk factors such as low socio-

economic status, neighbourhood violence and inadequate community resources (Edleson, 1999; Rudo, Powell, & Dunlap, 1998). A further contributing factor is that of secondary "system-generated trauma" experienced by these individuals, involving stressful, frightening, and emotionally overwhelming experiences as they move through the child welfare and juvenile court systems (Ryan, Bashant, & Brooks, 2006, p.62). These adversities, over-and-above the separation from their birth parents, threaten their optimal development (Gilgun, 2002).

The complex behavioural and psychological effects of trauma are well-documented within the literature, and there is a growing recognition that evidence-based practice is essential for effectively intervening with individuals within residential care who have been exposed to significant traumatic experiences (Cook, Blaustein, Spinnazzola, Van der Kolk, & the Complex Trauma Task Force, 2003). Adversities, such as those mentioned above, are likely to affect development in several areas, including a sense of belonging and trust, competence, autonomy, independence, initiative, industriousness, self-concept, and capacities for attending to the needs of others. Thus, undoing the effects of traumatic experiences and adversities, whilst fostering resilience, are significant components of therapeutic interventions (Gilgun, 2002). One suggested theoretical framework which focuses directly on resilience through addressing those areas likely to be affected is that of the Circle of Courage (CoC).

The Circle of Courage framework draws from positive psychology principles in which the focus is on building strengths and resilience (Brentdro, Brokenleg, & van Bockern, 2005). Four components, identified in Native American philosophy as the universal needs of all children, are focused on specifically: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. It is believed that positive growth results from opportunities to experience these four components (Brentdro & Larson, 2004). Gilgun (2002) defines belonging as fostering those connections we have with others, social integration and spirituality. Mastery involves competence, such as achievement of developmental tasks, skills in a range of activities, emotional regulation, and getting along well with others. Independence involves the freedom to make choices and to have control over the events in one's life, while showing consideration for others. The fourth component, generosity, can be defined as the capacity to give – usually time, attention and material things (Gilgun, 2002).

It just so happened that, whilst I was in the initial phases of exploring EAP as a possible thesis topic, we were introduced to the Circle of Courage theory during one of our lectures. I immediately became very aware of a link between the two. It seemed that, from what I had read in the literature thus far, EAP quite unintentionally seemed to target the four components of the Circle of Courage specifically. This was also clearly evident in my observations as a volunteer at The Centre. It made perfect sense. Not only do both EAP and the Circle of Courage aim to foster resilience, but they both do so through targeting the same areas in which development is likely to be affected in individuals who have experienced trauma, such as trust, competence, autonomy and independence, amongst others as discussed above.

I set out to research the CoC-EAP link, yet did not come across any texts in which this was documented. Instead, the only related text I did find was one in which the *need* for a theoretical framework for EAP is highlighted. Dell, Chalmers, Dell, Sauve, and MacKinnon (2008) report an absence of theoretical models and frameworks within which both the broad area of animal-assisted and more specifically equine-assisted interventions are situated. According to Kruger and Serpell (2006), a key concern cited in the literature is the lack of an empirically supported theoretical framework explaining how and why relationships between humans and animals may be therapeutic. Therefore, through using the theoretical framework of the CoC to explore EAP as a therapeutic approach, I aim to provide a means of addressing the above mentioned research gap, whilst at the same time documenting for the first time the CoC-EAP link.

In summary, the research seeks to explore EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care, particularly in terms of fostering resilience in order to assist them in overcoming their adversities. I shall use the Circle of Courage as a theoretical framework for this, linking EAP and the process of fostering resilience with a more solid theoretical foundation.

In more specific terms, the intended research seeks to address the following primary question:

How does EAP affect the lives of adolescents living in residential care?

Secondary research questions are:

- How do adolescents living in residential care experience EAP?
- How does EAP foster resilience?

Furthermore, I would like to begin to close the gap regarding South African-based literature on EAP.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

1.2.1 Research Paradigm

The qualitative study was conducted within an interpretive paradigm, and within a naturalistic setting. This approach allowed for the individual, subjective experiences and realities of those who have participated in EAP therapy to be acknowledged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mertens, 2005). Based on a constructivist ontology, socially constructed and multiple interpretations were explored within the case, rather than a "single, observable reality" (Merriam, 2009, p.8; Mertens, 2005). My active involvement as a volunteer and later researcher ensured that the personal experiences of each of the adolescents involved could be captured through direct interaction with the participants and the use of naturalistic methods of data collection. Furthermore, in this way I was able to acquire insight into EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach and its potential role in the fostering of resilience. Thus, the research questions as outlined above could be addressed.

1.2.2 Research Design

A case study was selected as the "strategy of inquiry" best suited in order to answer the research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.25). The case study design involves a detailed investigation into one specific case or unit of analysis as a means of acquiring insight into a particular issue, phenomenon or theory – namely, in this study, EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach (Wasburn, 2007). Such a framework was thought to be particularly useful for this research in that it allowed me to focus solely on one group of individuals participating in a specific EAP program at a selected therapy site. This facilitated my understanding of the broader applications of EAP, not only for the group but also for the general population of adolescents in residential care (Stake, 1995). The unit of analysis for this study included a group of adolescents living within residential care, who had participated in EAP therapy for a certain amount of time prior to the study.

1.2.3 Sample

Purposive, convenience and incidental sampling strategies were utilised in order to acquire a representative sample from amongst a theoretical population.

The use of purposive sampling measures allowed for the selection of a case which could illustrate the specific process of interest, namely EAP (Silverman, 2010). In order to be able to capture this process, it was required that I actively sought out a site at which it occurred, in my local area, and at which I would be welcome to conduct this research. The Centre was purposively selected as the research site.

Having made contact with and obtained the support of the relevant parties at The Centre, my sample was then selected based primarily on the group of individuals whom I could access. Adolescents within residential care, the population served at the specific site, were thus selected "on the basis of convenience", resulting in the occurrence of convenience sampling (Greener, 2011, p.64).

The theoretical population for this proposed study consisted primarily of a group of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 placed within residential care at The Home (pseudonym) and who happened to have been involved in EAP for eight months at the time. I considered this to be a reasonable amount of time in which I assumed they had ample opportunity to engage in the process and formulate an opinion of sorts regarding the meaning EAP had for them. This allowed for an in-depth exploration of their experiences to occur.

It was not initially my intention to select as participants a group of adolescents with whom I had had prior contact. However, after having been actively involved in the group's weekly sessions for approximately eight months, I strongly believed each member had an important and valuable story to share regarding their subjective experiences and meanings related to their EAP process. Through incorporating their voices, as opposed to relying primarily on my own observations over a period of time, as initially proposed, I felt I could acquire a far richer and more valid data set. Following this decision, the process of acquiring a case was incidental, rather than planned.

The adaptations made to my initial research design strengthened the quality of the research as it allowed for secondary participants to also be included within the case. These included the social worker responsible for the particular group of adolescents involved, the therapist, and I, in the role of volunteer. An accumulation of multiple perspectives, or "realities", was congruent with the qualitative, interpretive and case study research design (Merriam, 2009, p.8).

1.2.4 Methods of Data Collection

The methods used in order to gather the necessary data included: individual interviews with the primary participants; an interview with the social worker, specifically to obtain background information related to each of the adolescents involved; an interview with the therapist in order to gain further information regarding the EAP process followed at The Centre; and, my own reflections made during my time as a volunteer prior to the research process. A focus group discussion with the primary participants also occurred.

Semi-structured individual interviews with each of the primary participants facilitated the acquisition of their personal, subjective experiences, thoughts, and meanings related to the EAP process in which they had been involved. Their voices were central to the research as it attempted to answer questions related to the effect EAP had in *their* lives specifically.

In congruence with a qualitative study as well as the case study design, background information regarding the participants was useful in order to better describe the context for the study (Stake, 2000). In understanding how the participants came to be involved in EAP, the reader can better understand the purpose, aims and effects of the EAP program. In order to obtain this information, an interview was held with the social worker at the children's home involved, once consent was obtained from the participants to do so.

EAP is a broad term encapsulating a variety of different approaches in which horses are involved (K. Kidson, personal communication, April 20, 2013). An interview with the head therapist was therefore conducted in order to obtain further information about the specific approach applied at The Centre and in which the case was engaged.

My personal and active involvement as a volunteer working with this specific case meant that I had essentially been a part of it. I therefore utilised my personal informal reflective journal as a part of this investigation. This was written prior to the formal data collection period, therefore preventing my initial subjective viewpoints from becoming distorted. The addition of my journal contributed to the context and description of the case, and thus, I believe it enriched the data. Furthermore, it also aided in minimising potential investigator bias through making overt my personal experiences and frame of reference.

A more formal focus group interview with the primary participants was arranged following the data analysis process. During this, I aimed to verify the data obtained. The data was presented to the participants and they were invited to provide comments, additional

information, or alternative interpretations or explanations. The discussion was recorded, with the participants' consent, and transcriptions were made.

In accordance with a qualitative approach, multiple methods of data collection were selected in order to add "rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth" to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.5).

1.2.5 Data Analysis

Comprehensive data analysis occurred parallel to the data collection process and involved various processes, as outlined by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). Raw data was first formatted into transcriptions, allowing for easier and more accurate analysis. Following this, I immersed myself in the data, reading and re-reading it, whilst also listening to the recordings. The analysis process was then focused through reviewing the purpose of the research and what was to be explored specifically.

The core activities of qualitative data analysis can be defined as segmenting and reassembling (Boeije, 2010). The segmentation of the data involves a process of "coding", or the identification and labelling of different themes or patterns in the text (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p.31). These "codes" were then "reassembled" or organised into categories which served to summarise and bring meaning to the text, and to enhance understanding of the theory or phenomenon under investigation (Boeije, 2010, p.76). In this study, I looked specifically at those categories that emerged from the data, rather than those which may have been preconceived. This is often referred to as "thematic analysis" in the research-oriented literature (Dawson, 2009, p.119).

Tesch (1990) describes the data analysis process as one that is systematic and comprehensive, but not rigid (as cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). It involves an on-going process during which findings are generated and built upon as new pieces of data are gathered (Mertens, 2005). Similarly, the analysis process undertaken for this study involved a back and forth process of analysis, moving first through each of the individual interviews, and then integrating these findings with each-other as well as with the shared perceptions of the secondary research participants (myself, the social worker, and therapist). Following the focus group discussion, the data was then reviewed, with the additional data being incorporated into one final integrated, comprehensive data set, as presented in this study.

1.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Prior to the data collection process, participants had attended weekly 1.5 hour sessions at The Centre, as arranged between the relevant professionals at The Centre and the residential home in which they are placed. They were required to participate in the activities planned and executed by the therapeutic team, for which they had previously (and, separate from this study) consented to.

The data collection process commenced following the approval of the research ethics committee in August 2012, once all the necessary consent from the relevant parties had been obtained.

I began the process by sitting down at a viewpoint on Table Mountain and reflecting on and journaling my experiences at The Centre with the group involved in this study. I recalled my initial thoughts and feelings and how these had changed over time. I also wrote about my interactions and relationships that developed with the individuals and the growth that I observed in each of them. It was important that this was done at the outset in order to be able to protect my own subjective perspectives from being distorted as would likely happen as the interviews commenced.

Following this, I met with each of the adolescents and presented and explored the interview questions. I spent several afternoons at The Home allowing every participant sufficient time to recount their experiences and stories. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and the initial data analysis ensued.

My next step entailed seeking the voices of the social worker and the therapist to add to the picture that had been created thus far. I was then able to draw together all these rich and valuable findings and present them to the primary participants for review. During our focus group discussion, they were able to confirm, reject or add to the analysed data, thus further 'fine-tuning' the case to be presented. From this, I was able to complete a final analysis and integration of the findings, and to document these in the research report.

1.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Various strategies were implemented to assist in the production of quality and scientifically sound research. This is in keeping with Guba and Lincoln's (1985) criteria to be considered

by researchers "in pursuit of a trustworthy study", namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004, p.64).

Through peer examination (supervision) possible risks to the above-mentioned criteria could be identified and addressed. Triangulation or the use of multiple methods and voices allowed for the subjective experiences of the participants to be most accurately and comprehensively represented. Researcher reflexivity was necessary to minimise the effect of personal bias and subjectivity being imposed on the findings. An audit trail documenting the research process followed is presented in Chapter 3. It is intended for this to provide the reader with adequate information for them to be able to determine for themselves the extent to which the study meets the criteria outlined for quality assurance. The use of thick descriptions was also important in this regard. Prolonged engagement in the research as well as member checking through the focus group discussion were further strategies used to allow for findings which could be considered credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the research process I placed much emphasis on ensuring that I acted in accordance with my own personal values and beliefs as well as the ethical principles of the Psychology profession. The guidance of an Independent Ethics Review Committee, my supervisor, and several relevant documents was sought to ensure the production of quality ethical research and the well-being of all involved. In combination with these strategies, I selected to use the framework of Emanuel, Wendler, Killen and Grady (2004) to guide my thinking related to the ethical considerations for this particular study.

The research was conducted in collaboration with those involved, with the aim of mitigating any potential power imbalances and ensuring that all were able to participate and benefit in sufficiently equal measure. Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity formed a key component in promoting these collaborative relationships. The benefits of the research extend beyond those on the researcher's agenda, and it is hoped that through this study more professionals may consider EAP as an alternative therapeutic approach. Following this, more individuals may be able to gain access to this form of support. The possible risks surrounding the research process were explored and contingency plans put in place in advance to protect the well-being of the participants. Confidentiality and anonymity have been maintained through the use of pseudonyms as well as altering any identifying information. Informed consent was gained from The Centre, the social worker, each of the participants and, due to

their status as minors in South African law, their legal guardian. This included consent for voice recordings and transcriptions of the interviews to be made.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The definitions of certain commonly used words are provided below, as they are intended to be understood within the above text, and in the chapters that follow:

1.6.1 Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP)

Following a thorough review of the literature, an integrated definition of EAP is presented. EAP involves a psychotherapeutic approach in which horses are included as part of the therapy team. They are incorporated into therapeutic activities in many different ways, depending on the purpose and nature of the activity. Horses are believed to have specific qualities which make them ideally suited within the therapeutic context, as discussed in the introduction above, and the literature review to follow.

1.6.2 Adolescents

Adolescents, as defined by the World Health Organisation (2013) include those individuals, both male and female, who fall between the age ranges of 10 and 19.

1.6.3 Vulnerable Adolescents or Youth at Risk?

Several terms are used within the literature to categorise youth who, for some or other reason, may be considered emotionally vulnerable. As stated in Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990), labels can convey dual meanings, and thus they are often debated and disagreed upon. Within this text, I have chosen to utilise the terms "vulnerable adolescents' and 'youth at risk' interchangeably. These are the terms I encountered frequently within the literature relevant to my study. Furthermore, they avoid "blaming the child", and thus resonate with the strengths based Circle of Courage philosophy utilised within this study (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.2).

1.6.4 Residential Care or Children's Home?

The terms residential care and children's home have been used interchangeably within the text, with the same intended meaning. In this text they are understood as institutions which provide care and accommodation for those individuals who have been removed from their

families and homes or who for whatever reason are not able to live with a parent, relative or foster parent.

1.6.5 Resilience

Resilience, as understood in this study, is defined by the American Psychological Association Help Centre (2004) as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma... or significant sources of stress" (as cited in Hay & Weyers, 2009, p.434). It includes developing an "ability to rebound from adversity with greater strength to meet future challenges" (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p.194).

1.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a personal account illustrating the initial steps of this journey. A background to the research was provided, together with a formulation of the research problem and questions. The process of exploration was outlined, and a discussion of the methodology included. Ethical considerations were carefully considered and documented to allow for quality, ethical research to occur.

Literature concerning the relevant areas of exploration of this study is reviewed in the following chapter.

Details of the process followed to answer the specific research questions are presented in Chapter 3. This includes a detailed exploration of the research paradigm, design and methodology. Methods of data collection and analysis are also presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the quality control measures implemented and the ethical considerations related to this study.

An exposition of the research findings is presented in Chapter 4 in an attempt to answer the research questions as outlined in Chapters 1 and 3.

A discussion of the findings, recommendations, strengths and limitations of the study is presented in Chapter 5, followed by the concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents who have been placed in residential care each have their own, unique life-stories which characterise their development and well-being. However, they often share the experiences of trauma, usually involving abuse, neglect, loss or abandonment, and thus a great need for emotional support. The Circle of Courage is a philosophy that is familiar amongst child-care workers in South Africa working towards helping individuals overcome the above-mentioned traumas. It provides a framework for intervention that strives to develop what is believed to be the four elements essential to positive development and resilience, namely Generosity, Mastery, Belonging and Independence. Within this study, I look specifically at an Equine Assisted Psychotherapy intervention in which adolescents in residential care have participated. EAP provides an alternative approach in which the horse is incorporated as a vehicle enabling '*difficult to reach*' individuals to open up, verbalise problems, and resolve emotional or behavioural difficulties (Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004). This study serves to document the adolescent's individual and collective experiences and the meaning EAP has had for them. I also explore how the Circle of Courage philosophy is integrated into the EAP process, and therefore how EAP contributes to the development of resilience in the lives of the participants.

In order to be able to provide a comprehensive investigation into the research questions outlined for the study, insight into each of its parts is essential. It is for this reason that I have separated the literature review into three parts. I begin by contextualising the study, specifically looking at the developmental phase of the adolescent and the experiences and emerging needs of adolescents removed from their homes and placed into residential care. An overview of the Circle of Courage philosophy is then provided. The third and final component includes a thorough analysis of the EAP approach - the primary focus of this study.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

The study specifically explores the lived experiences of adolescents, and thus an understanding of this developmental phase is critical. Following this, literature discussing the relatively current context of residential care placement in South Africa is presented.

2.2.1 The Adolescent Developmental Phase

Sigmund Freud's (1961) psychoanalytical theory provided an early understanding of personality development through the lifespan (as cited in Meyer & Viljoen, 2008). His work describes the oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital stages, which occur in succession as the individual matures. Progression from stage to stage is attributed to changes in the sources of sexual drive energy. According to Freud (1961), adolescence is characterised by a reawakening of sexual wishes onset by the physiological changes associated with puberty. The adolescent is tasked with finding ways of coping with these urges, such as through relationships, work and sport (Meyer & Viljoen, 2008, p.77). Freud' s work encouraged others to continue to explore development over the lifespan, thus setting the foundation for a new and separate discipline within psychology – Developmental Psychology (Meyer & Viljoen, 2008, p.81).

One such theory which emerged in later years is that of Erik Erikson's (1963) stages of psychosocial development. Like Freud, it is Erikson's belief that development occurs in a series of stages. However, his theory incorporates the impact of both genetics and social experience across the whole lifespan, up until the maturity phase (Schultz, 1990; Cherry,2013). The adolescence phase is characterised by the crisis between identity formation and role confusion (Berendt, 1994). The young person is faced with a struggle to select the roles, goals and values which will provide direction and a sense of purpose (Carroll & Wolpe, 1996; Erikson, 1968). An adapted view of self is required as an individual matures physically during puberty and the demands placed on them by society begin to change, particularly regarding their careers (Meyer & Viljoen, 2008). The quest for identity may result in clashes with society or those close to them (Meyer & Viljoen, 2008). Erikson (1963), suggests a sense of identity is achieved when one is able to integrate all their identifications, drives, wishes, expectations, abilities and skill with the opportunities offered to them by society (as cited in Meyer & Viljoen, 2008).

Various studies document current trends characterising the adolescence life phase. Beckert (2007), explores patterns of accelerated physical development at younger ages resulting in individuals looking more grown up than they actually are. It is suggested that an implication of this is the early confrontation of decisions regarding risk taking behaviours such as participation with drugs, alcohol and sexual activity (Beckert, 2007). Eccles and Goorman (2002) also list the following as additional challenges: shifts in parent-child relationships from dependency to responsibility; the exploration of new sexual and social roles; intimate partnerships; social and personal identity formation; planning and pursuing one's future; and, acquiring skills and values required for the transition into adulthood (as cited in Zarrett & Eccles, 2006).

2.2.2 Adolescents Living in Residential Care

According to the United Nations (UNICEF, 2006), approximately 8 million children around the world are living in out-of-home care. Within South Africa these include those who: have been abandoned or orphaned and who are without any visible means of support; display behaviour which cannot be controlled by the parent or care-giver; live or work on the streets, or beg for a living; are addicted to a dependence-producing substance and without support to obtain treatment; have been exploited or live in circumstances that expose the child to exploitation; live in or are exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm that child's physical, mental or social well-being; are at risk of exposure to serious harm if returned to the custody of the parent, guardian or caregiver; are in a state of physical or mental neglect; or, have been maltreated, abused, deliberately neglected or degraded by a parent (Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007, 2010).

According to Zuravin and DePanfilis (1997), the removal of children from their homes is done specifically to protect them from physical harm (as cited in Troutman, Ryan & Cardi, n.d.). As a result, children residing in out-of-home care usually come from neglectful, abusive or chaotic and dysfunctional homes, and have experienced adversities such as poverty, parental substance abuse and mental health problems, conflicted social support networks, domestic violence, and homelessness (Berger, Bruch, Johnson, James & Rubin, 2009; Fraser, n.d.; Osborn & Delfabbro, 2006).

The process for placement in residential care in South Africa is outlined in the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (2010). Before placement can occur, a thorough investigation needs to be undertaken by a social worker following a complaint. A report is compiled and,

should the designated social worker find the child to be in need of care and protection, that child is brought before the children's court. Ryan et al. (2006) identify that secondary "system-generated trauma" may result following "stressful, frightening, and emotionally overwhelming experiences" as they "move through the child welfare and juvenile court systems" (as cited in Hummer, Dollard, Robst & Armstrong, n.d. p.80). The court may make an appropriate order, one of which could involve the placement of the individual in a child and youth care centre that provides a residential care programme suited to their needs. This is only done provided another option is not appropriate, the developmental, therapeutic and educational needs of the child are taken into account, and the residential care programme is best suited for that child. The distance of the home from the child's family or community, the safety of the community and any other relevant factors are also considered before placements are made.

The decision to remove an individual from their home as opposed to family preservation is a difficult one as it is likely to have several negative implications, despite ensuring the protection of the child (Doyle, 2007). Those placed outside their homes are likely to "be exposed to serious psychological and emotional risks" (Fraser, n.d., p.1). Placement in residential care is, according to Zuravin and DePanfilis (1997), "typically associated with numerous disruptions in attachment relationships" as the losses experienced "undermine a child's attempt to form a secure attachment with a primary caregiver" (as cited in Troutman et al., n.d., p.1). Such losses "are often accompanied by rage, grief, sadness and despair" – emotions found even amongst children who have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused by their parents (Fraser, n.d., p.1).

According to Rutter (2000), although "out-of-home placement may provide children with physical safety and opportunities to develop nurturing relationships with adults..., its abrupt and indefinite nature may also place additional burdens on already vulnerable children" and therefore, "both opportunities for resilience and new stressors" are presented (as cited in Berger et al., 2009, p.1857). Children who have been removed from their homes have been found to struggle with the following issues: blaming themselves and feeling guilty about removal from their parents; wishing to return to birth parents even if they were abused by them; and, feeling insecure and uncertain about their future (Berger et al., 2009; Doyle, 2007). Abnormal behavioural and emotional functioning, poor social functioning, attachment-related problems, early parenthood, unemployment, and a premature discontinuation in education are also listed as common implications within the literature

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(Reid & Ross, 2005). Furthermore, children in out-of-home care are "more likely than other children to commit crimes, drop out of school, join welfare, experience substance abuse problems, or enter the homeless population" (Doyle, 2007, p.1584).

The array of implications that may result following placement in residential care, in combination with exposure to significant adversity prior to the placement, is likely to have a negative impact on the individuals concerned. However, "despite the recognition of the complex needs of many children in care, most care systems have few, if any, systematic processes or methodologies in place to allow for the early identification and ongoing monitoring of their needs" (Osborn & Delfabbro, 2006, p.17). The limited resources available, particularly within a South African context, results in only a select few being able to cope with, adapt to, and overcome these adversities (Gilgun, 2002). Children cannot be expected to become resilient on their own, but rather "communities must provide resources that young people in care can use to become resilient and in their turn become persons who guide, serve as role models, affirm and encourage" (Gilgun, 2002, p.83).

2.3 A FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE: THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Resilience can be defined as "achieving positive life outcomes in spite of risk" whilst also developing an "ability to rebound from adversity with greater strength to meet future challenges" (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p.194). According to Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990), it includes "effectively coping with, adapting to, and overcoming the effects of adversities", and "transforming them into opportunities for growth and development" (as cited in Gilgun, 2002, p.66; Hay & Weyers, 2009, p.435).

Rather than being determined by an inherent personality trait, resilience involves "behaviours, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop" (Hay & Weyers, 2009, p.436). According to Hay and Weyers (2009), contemporary research suggests that multiple mechanisms and processes are involved in shaping a resilient response. A broad and diverse array of resilience theory literature is available, as highlighted in Liebenberg and Ungar (2008).

The complex behavioural and psychological effects of trauma are also well-documented within the literature, and there is a growing recognition that research-proven practice is essential to support the development of resilience in individuals who have been exposed to

significant traumatic experiences (Cook et al., 2003; van der Kolk, 2005). One such framework for intervention is the Circle of Courage.

The Circle of Courage depicts a philosophy of child and youth development, based on traditional child-rearing philosophies of the traditional Native American people (Brendtro et al., 1990). Larry Brendtro, professor in children's behaviour disorders, and Martin Brokenleg, professor of Native American studies, worked together to formulate this philosophy through studying the methods used by traditional indigenous cultures to raise respectful, responsible children, without the use of punitive or coercive discipline (Starr Institute for Training, 2012). The model integrates these cultural wisdoms with findings gained through professional practice working with troubled youth, and modern youth development research (Starr Institute for Training, 2012).

Lakota artist, George Bluebird, depicted the Circle of Courage model as a medicine wheel (Figure 2.1), characteristic of Native American culture (Starr Institute for Training, 2012). Native people would traditionally gather at medicine wheels in celebration, reflection, teaching, decision-making, healing, or for restoration. Physically, medicine wheels are created using stones of various sizes, and are divided into four quadrants, representing north, south, east, and west (Gilgun, 2002). In Bluebird's illustrations, these quadrants represent the four central values of Native philosophies of child socialisation, as proposed by Brendtro et al. (1990) – Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity (Gilgun, 2002).
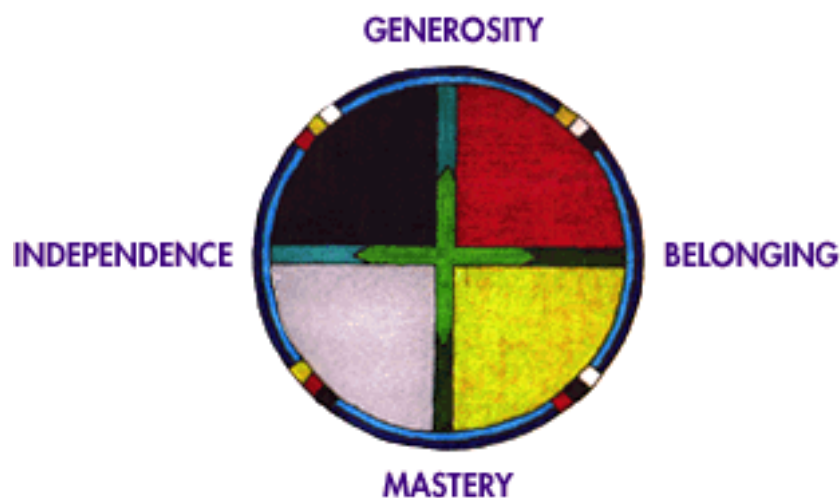
Figure 2.1. George Bluebird's depiction of the Circle of Courage medicine wheel

Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity are described as the four elements or growth needs essential for positive youth development and, combined form Brendtro et al.'s (1990) Circle of Courage (Marlowe, Pearl, & Marlowe, 2009; Winter & Preston, 2006). Whilst other underlying physical and safety needs do exist, child and youth behaviour is viewed as a purposeful attempt to meet these "anchor points of psychosocial maturation" (Marlowe et al., 2009, p.3; Winter & Preston, 2006; Wood, Brendtro, Fecser, & Nichols, 1999). Like in other Native medicine wheels, the four elements are interdependent – if one is well-nurtured, it is likely that the other three are satisfied too. However, instability in one can influence functioning in other elements, and thus the circle is said to be "broken" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.46; Gilgun, 2002). Attempts are then made to create "reclaiming environments" in which one or more of the elements can be fostered and the circle completed (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.51; DeSalvatore, Millspaugh, & Long, 2009).

According to the Circle of Courage philosophy, when the key growth needs of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are met, positive growth results and children and youth are able to thrive and reach their full potential (Brendtro & Larson, 2004). However, when these are lacking, developing individuals are at risk, and may present a range of problematic behaviours (Brendtro & Larson, 2004; Starr Institute for Training, 2012). These behaviours are seen as the youth's maladaptive attempts to meet personal needs (Winter & Preston, 2006). In the modern-day context, this is all too common, as children experience conflicts in home, school, peer groups, and their communities, preventing basic growth needs from being achieved (Starr Institute for Training, 2012). When the Circle is broken and the lives of children are no longer in harmony or balance, these individuals are said to become "discouraged" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.46). Four ecological hazards or "seeds of discouragement" are identified in the lives of vulnerable youth, namely: destructive relationships; climates of futility; learned irresponsibility; and, loss of purpose (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.46). Discouraged individuals may then display traits opposite to those promoted within the Circle, such as experiencing alienation, rather than a sense of belonging; failure, rather than mastery; irresponsibility, as opposed to independence; and, selfishness instead of generosity (Brendtro et al., 2005).

The four themes of the Circle of Courage model connect with key ideas from strengths-based Western theories of human development, particularly resilience studies, and positive psychology models (Gilgun, 2002; Winter & Preston, 2006). They also reflect the work of Stanley Coopersmith (1967) in which four components of self-esteem are identified:

significance, competence, power, and virtue (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002; Reid & Ross, 2005). An important quality of Brendtro et al.'s (1990) model is that it provides an alternative perspective to the pessimistic views imposed in many of today's prevailing approaches regarding problematic youth behaviours (Brendtro & Larson, 2004). Youth are commonly described as deviant, disruptive, disturbed, or disordered, and attempts are made to punish behaviours and treat disorders (Brendtro & Larson, 2004). The Circle of Courage philosophy attempts to shift the focus away from negative traits of troubled children, and rather focuses on positive, "reclaiming" environmental transactions (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.6). The ultimate goal is to "complete the circle", and in doing so undo the effects of adversity and promote resilience (Gilgun, 2002, p.66).

Within current literature, more detailed interpretations of Brendtro et al.'s four universal growth needs are discussed, together with their applications in modern-day child and youth development (Gilgun, 2002).

2.3.1 Belonging

Belonging, within Native culture, includes not only belonging to a certain family, but also to a supportive community, as children are believed to belong to both their families and their "band" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.37). Connections are further extended to nature, as harmony with all living things, animals, vegetation, and the land is encouraged (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002). According to Brentdro et al. (1990), "we all live with others to a greater or lesser extent" and "depend on each other for support and companionship" – we are all interdependent (Reid & Ross, 2005, p.166). Healthy relationships and a true sense of belonging are thus essential, as we "must relate to others responsibly to live happy and productive lives" (Reid & Ross, 2005, p.166).

A sense of belonging may be fostered in many ways, such as through experiencing love and support, positive relationships, or a sense of connection to family, friends, and community (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002). Through adequate exposure to opportunities to establish trusting connections, a "normal" sense of belonging is acquired (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.47). Such an individual may present as attached, loving, friendly, intimate, gregarious, cooperative, and trusting (Brendtro et al., 1990). A distorted sense of belonging may result in gang loyalty, promiscuity, clinging, cult vulnerability, over dependence, or, a desperate need for affection (Brendtro et al., 1990). Should this element be entirely absent in one's life, the individual is likely to be unattached, guarded, rejected, lonely, aloof, isolated,

and distrustful (Brendtro et al., 1990). The "remedy" in such cases, is believed to be within "corrective relationships of trust and intimacy" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.47).

This element resonates with Maslow's (1968) theory of human development – a sense of belonging and being loved forms the third level within his hierarchy of developmental needs. Research on risk and resilience also highlights the importance of harmonious relationships with adults and peers, emphasising the ability of young people to develop appropriately despite adversities when they have long-term, stable relationships that promote a sense of belonging (Gilgun, 2002). Within these relationships, they are also exposed to positive role models, and opportunities to share personal and sensitive information with a trusted person, further promoting healthy development (Gilgun, 2002).

2.3.2 Independence

A sense of Independence is defined as the universal need of all people to "be free, to be in control of themselves, and to be able to influence others" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.43). It also involves taking into consideration the effects one's own behaviours and words may have on others, and modifying these in response (Gilgun, 2002). Through providing opportunities for youth to make choices and participate in decisions concerning their well-being, they are able to take ownership and responsibility, and to develop important skills that they need to live as self-controlled, self-disciplined, and efficient adults (DeSalvatore et al., 2009; Gilgun, 2002; Reid & Ross, 2005). Further, it promotes positive outcomes, and minimises misbehaviours – acting out behaviours decrease and individuals are more respectful when their need to make decisions is respected and when they feel more in control (DeSalvatore et al., 2009). Youth with a healthy sense of independence are generally autonomous, confident, assertive, responsible, and self-disciplined, and may display strong leadership qualities (Brendtro et al., 1990). A distorted sense of independence may result in dictatorial, reckless, macho, manipulative, or rebellious behaviours and the individual may bully others or defy authority (Brendtro et al., 1990). Without opportunities to assert independence, submissive, irresponsible, undisciplined behaviours are likely to result, with the individual lacking confidence, feeling inferior or helpless, and being easily led (Brendtro et al., 1990).

According to Native American culture, in order to experience independence, children first need to be dependent (Brendtro et al., 1990). During this time, they learn to respect and value elders, and are taught desired behaviours, as well as the value of independence (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002). Over time, they are presented with increased opportunities to learn

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and make choices, and are exposed to the concept of natural consequences (Brendtro et al., 1990; Marlowe et al., 2009). Children should be allowed to make both good and bad choices, as poor choices can be used as teaching opportunities (DeSalvatore et al., 2009). Through experiencing independence, youth are better able to develop self-control and responsibility, and realise that they are in charge of their attitudes and choices (Brendtro et al., 2005; Marlowe et al., 2009). Independence is, however, monitored and limited by social controls, imposed due to societies need to minimise harmful behaviours, (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002).

2.3.3 Mastery

Mastery involves being able to do some things well and to feel pride in being able to so (Brendtro et al., 1990). In Native cultures, competence is encouraged within cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. The definition of Mastery also includes the development of an ability to exercise self-control and to, over time, learn responsibility as well as "the rules that create order within human communities" (Gilgun, 2002, p.70). Native children are taught values such as acknowledging and taking pride in the achievements of others, and to accept honour and achievement without arrogance (Gilgun, 2002). They are encouraged to view their own achievements as belonging to the community as well as themselves (Gilgun, 2002). Furthermore, a skilled person is viewed as a model, rather than a competitor, and each person is to strive towards a personal goal, rather than to be superior (Brendtro et al., 1990).

Through satisfaction of the need for mastery, motivation for further achievement is enhanced and one usually feels better equipped to negotiate difficulties (Marlowe et al., 2009). Young people with a distorted sense of mastery, however, may be seen as overachievers, arrogant, risk-seeker, or "workaholics", whilst an absence of Mastery experiences may lead to an avoidance of risks, a lack of motivation, giving-up, and feelings of inadequacy (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.48). Frustration, troubled behaviours, and a sense of helplessness may also prevail (Brendtro et al., 1990).

Mastery can be enhanced through involvement in an environment with plenty of opportunities for meaningful achievement, as well as through solving problems and meeting personal goals (Brendtro et al., 2005). This need can be promoted through story-telling, team games, ceremonies, and, art activities for example, as well as, traditionally, through taking age appropriate responsibility for household tasks and the care of younger children (Gilgun,

2002). According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998), what constitutes competence varies across cultures, as well as racial and socio-economic groups. Community members assist in the development of competence through modelling appropriate conduct, setting limits, and, providing helpful explanations and/or high expectations (Batavick, 1997). Communities offering a wide variety of child and youth-oriented activities also help to encourage youth to find areas in which they may experience mastery (Gilgun, 2002).

2.3.4 Generosity

Generosity, or to be generous and unselfish, is described by Brendtro et al. (1990) as the highest virtue in Native culture. It involves giving to others in many forms, including time, care, recognition, material goods, and services, and it requires balancing one's personal interests with those of others (Brendtro et al., 1990). It does not mean being selfless to the point where one's own interests are at stake, although it may involve a sacrifice by giving up something that one wants (Gilgun, 2002). The philosophy is based on the understanding that what one gives, comes back (Gilgun, 2002). Youth are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, and to focus on the needs of their family, friends, peers, and other community members (Gilgun, 2002; Marlowe et al., 2009).

Generosity is taught through words and deeds of elders in Native tribes (Gilgun, 2002). Furthermore, it is learned from being the recipient of generosity, as well as through experiencing the rewards of giving to others (Gilgun, 2002). As individuals realise "the ripple effect of their choices and actions" they begin to acknowledge that they can affect others in a positive manner (Marlowe et al., 2009, p.5). Acts of Generosity lead to increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, and caring for others is believed to be an essential resource for coping with life's stresses and conflicts (Brendtro et al., 1990). Breaking free from a preoccupation with self, and experiencing the joys of helping others, has enabled "an oppressed people to survive generations of great economic and personal hardships", and adds to the meaningfulness of life (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.45). Youth should be expected to be caregivers, and not just "helpless recipients overly dependent on the care of adults" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.3).

Through experiencing Generosity, youth are able to develop into altruistic, caring, loyal, empathic, pro-social, and supportive members of society. However, should this need not be satisfied, they may present as selfish, affectionless, narcissistic, disloyal, hardened, anti-social, or exploitative (Brendtro et al., 1990). Adolescents should thus be encouraged to care

for all living things, provide assistance to others, engage in community service, and to be considerate of others whilst pursuing one's own life goals (Gilgun, 2002; Reid & Ross, 2005). These ideas are resonated in Maslow's (1968) theory, in which important human needs of respect and esteem for self and others are said to be developed through caring and service (Gilgun, 2002).

Discussions as to whether or not a model based on traditional Native philosophies can be relevant today have emerged. Brendtro et al. (1990), however, view the Circle of Courage as "the distillation of 15,000 years of wisdom that represent what is perhaps the most effective system of positive discipline ever developed" (Gilgun, 2002, p.35). Rather than being outmoded, "the guiding principles of Native socialisation practices have stood the test of time" as they encapsulate broad ideas which "can be applied to the many diversities and contingencies" in modern society (Gilgun, 2002, p.81). The basic growth needs of Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity have yet to be challenged, and they are readily embraced by children and youth (Brendtro et al., 2005). Brendtro et al. (1990) provide a model which researchers and practitioners can adapt to make more applicable to specific contexts (Gilgun, 2002). Further, as it integrates several developmental and resilience theories, it can be seen as a unifying tool integrating "the complex factors identified by diverse researchers" (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p.197).

This exposition of the theory regarding the Circle of Courage brings me to a review of existing literature on EAP, in order to explore a possible confluence of ideas between these two phenomena related to supporting healthy development in young people.

2.4 AN EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACH

2.4.1 What is EAP?

2.4.1.1 Animal-Assisted Therapy

EAP falls under the animal-assisted therapy umbrella, which can be defined as a goal-directed psychotherapeutic intervention in which an animal forms an integral part of the treatment (Dimitrijević, 2009). The animal facilitates the healing and rehabilitation of the participant and promotes improvement in physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning (Rothe et al., 2004). Animals commonly used as therapeutic partners include dogs, cats, rodents, horses, and dolphins (le Roux, 2013; Rothe et al., 2004).

2.4.1.2 Similar or Related Terms and Approaches

Although the term EAP is utilised within this text, a number of other terms can be found within the literature to describe similar, related practices. These include: Equine Assisted Counselling, Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy or Learning, or, simply, Equine Therapy. Hippotherapy is also often referred to, although this is different from EAP. It primarily uses the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy for individuals experiencing difficulties with neuromuscular control associated with illnesses or physical impairments, such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, traumatic brain injuries, pervasive developmental disorders, or sensory integration disorders (Strom & Wilson, 2009). The gait of the horse is used to strengthen muscles through stimulating a response similar to walking, and this process is facilitated predominantly by physiotherapists and occupational therapists (Strom & Wilson, 2009). Therapeutic vaulting also appears in the literature. This involves performing gymnastics atop a horse, whilst on a lunge line controlled by a horse professional and supervised by a therapist. An emphasis is placed on compulsory moves, teamwork, communication, and self-expression in order for psychotherapeutic progress or growth to occur (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005).

2.4.1.3 Defining EAP

The simplest definition of EAP involves an experiential psychotherapeutic approach that includes the use of the horse as part of the therapeutic team (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz, Bivens, Leinart, & Klontz, 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008; Vidrine, Owen-Smith, & Faulkner, 2002). The horse is seen as a guide or vehicle enabling individuals, particularly those considered difficult to reach, to open up, verbalise problems, resolve emotional or behavioural difficulties within themselves, and to develop a deeper sense of self and of the self in relation to others (Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002). Although learning to ride may form part of the process, an EAP session is not a riding class, but rather a therapeutic, hands-on, approach in which interaction with the horse is utilised to facilitate and promote personal well-being and development (Ewing et al., 2007). Activities involving horses are presented which require the development and application of certain important life skills, such as: verbal and non-verbal communication, assertiveness, creative thinking, problem-solving, leadership, responsibility, teamwork, confidence, and attitude (Rothe et al., 2004).

2.4.2 Historical Overview

The healing nature of the human-horse relationship has been acknowledged throughout history. Horses have been referred to in the ancient mythology of the Celts, Greeks, Indo-Europeans, Iberians, Berbers, and Asia's, embodying a healing metaphor (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). More than two centuries ago German physicians advised horseback riding to relieve patients of "hypochondria and hysteria attacks" related to mental illness, and the use of animals in mental health interventions has been documented in literature dating as early as 1792 (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, p.7; Klontz et al., 2007).

Pioneered by Aaron Katcher of the University of Pennsylvania, a growth of animal-assisted therapy was evident in the 1970s and 1980s, with the first animal facilitated therapy paper appearing in a recognised medical journal in 1980 (Vidrine et al., 2002). Following this, terms such as "ippotherapia" (horse therapy), and "equestre reducazione" (re-education through horse riding), relating directly to horse related interventions, emerged, and were used in an international convention on therapeutic horse-riding in 1982 (Dimitrijević, 2009, p.237). The forerunners of equine-related therapeutic interventions focused predominantly on the benefits of either riding or vaulting, but today the emphasis has shifted to that of "horse-personship", or the horse-human relationship (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, p7).

In 1996, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) formalised a section of the organisation to focus specifically on mental health development – the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association, or EFMHA (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). In 1999 an international Non-Profit Organisation, the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), was formed, devoted to the development of high standards and professionalism in the EAP field (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005).

EAP is becoming an increasingly recognised and utilised psychotherapeutic approach as documented in the literature. It has been used successfully across Europe and North America, as well as in, for example, Canada, New Zealand, and more recently, South Africa. A South African EAGALA branch was developed in 2008, as well as EAPISA (Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa), founded in 2007, a professional body striving to maintain strict ethical and legal standards (EAGALA, 2010; EAPISA, n.d.). Both organisations have been integral in allowing for and promoting the growth of EAP in the South African context. They offer certification training courses to local practitioners and horse professionals. EAPISA also offers introductory workshops, member support, case-

study discussions, as well as encouraging policy development and research in the field of EAP (EAPISA, n.d.).

2.4.3 The Use of Horses in Psychotherapy

2.4.3.1 Why Horses?

The significant effects of animal-human relationships and the benefits that may emerge from these have been widely documented. There is much evidence supporting positive behaviour and health modifications as a result of animal interactions (Dimitrijević, 2009). Furthermore, animals are believed to have a calming effect on an individual, aiding therapeutic communication and serving as the link enabling easier access into sensitive content (Dimitrijević, 2009).

At approximately 500kg, the horse solicits respect from those in its presence – a frequent problem area of those involved in EAP (Ewing et al., 2007). Furthermore, "humanity is irresistibly drawn to this enigmatic creature of magnetic beauty and tremendous power" (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, p.14). Although initially intimidated by their size, with the help of the therapist, participants are able to realise that horses are prey animals with little interest in hurting humans, unless for their own self-protection when under perceived threat (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). The use of such a large, powerful animal provides an empowering experience for the client once the initial fear is overcome, and this has positive effects on their self-esteem and self-confidence (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Trotter et al., 2008). Previous participants of an EAP program have described the process of working with horses as meaningful in that it has helped them to see their problems as being more manageable. If they are able to gain the cooperation of a 1000 pound animal, smaller life challenges are viewed as being not so daunting (Trotter et al., 2008). Furthermore, the positive response of such a powerful animal to a command given by a vulnerable individual serves as the ultimate sense of validation of power and control, providing a safe medium for regaining a healthy control over their life (Trotter et al., 2008).

There is much literature to support the belief that individuals are able to be more verbally expressive in their interactions with animals (le Roux, 2013; Vidrine et al., 2002). The horse serves as a vehicle enabling youths to open up, and to verbalise and resolve their problems and fears (Ewing et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). Reasons provided for this phenomenon centre around the therapeutic non-verbal messages of unconditional positive regard and

complete non-judgement communicated by the horse (Vidrine et al., 2002). They are not interested in one's size, appearance or social status, nor do they impose any expectations, prejudices or preconceived motives (Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002). Such a lack of judgement frees up all relationships and results in the creation of a safe environment in which emotional issues are brought to the surface (Christian, 2005; Dingman, 2008). Horses naturally have patience, loyalty, and a quiet way of listening and responding that encourages engagement from children (Dingman, 2008). A horse will extend and demonstrate love without restraint which may be particularly meaningful for those who have experienced a lack of parental love, or who have an inability to demonstrate love and affection (Rothe et al., 2004). They provide opportunities for overtly giving and receiving affection – something which is necessary for healthy growth and personality development (Rothe et al., 2004). Through interacting with a horse, vulnerable children are able to unite unconditionally with another living being, and to self-disclose in a safe and respectful way (Rothe et al., 2004).

Interactions with horses allow for individuals to demonstrate affection, and to be physically intimate in a manner in which they feel comfortable, and at a pace which they can control (Vidrine et al., 2002). Hugging, kissing, brushing and touching the horses with which they work allows for displays of physical affection by those who ordinarily shun physical and emotional closeness (Rothe et al., 2004; Vidrine et al., 2002). The horse-human relationship is described as a special companionship in which caring is taught and communicated, and empathy is developed (Rothe et al., 2004; Vidrine et al., 2002). The use of the horse thus provides an experience that is both physical as well as social (Ewing et al., 2007).

The horse also serves as a therapeutic motivator. The curiosity aroused by these powerful, majestic, and often unfamiliar animals, contributes to client motivation, participation, and cooperation (Trotter et al., 2008). The enjoyment and satisfaction obtained through engagement in the EAP activities and the time spent with the horses is rewarding, and thus further contributes to active client participation in the process (Trotter et al., 2008).

As prey animals, horses are biologically programmed with a strong ability to read and respond to social behaviours (Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). This is a skill necessary for survival in a herd, but also one which makes them particularly well-suited for therapy. They demonstrate an ability to accurately and honestly observe, read and respond to the messages communicated by humans (Trotter et al., 2008). The emotions and behaviours elicited through EAP activities are mirrored back to the client through an instinctual feedback

loop, as the horse responds immediately and directly to their verbal and non-verbal messages (Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). Thus, therapeutic interactions with horses can result in an increased awareness of one's own non-verbal communications, and serve as catalysts for personal awareness and growth (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Klontz et al., 2007). Participants are encouraged to, through interpretation and insight, become aware of their own behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, and to develop new ways of being around the horse. This allows for more effective communication, which may shift the horse's behaviour and enable the completion of an EAP activity (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Trotter et al., 2008). In this way, horses are able to teach humans to send congruent messages through spoken-, as well as body-language (Vidrine et al., 2002). As the individual develops an increasing awareness of their verbal and non-verbal behaviours, they are able to communicate more clearly with the horses, and therefore gain more cooperation. Activities are thus more easily accomplished, and participants begin to generalise these new ways of being to their relationships and interactions with other people (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005).

The EAP process presents many opportunities for transference and projection, and the horse becomes a vehicle through which participants can explore personal, often unconscious, issues and feelings (Trotter et al., 2008). The diversity amongst horses, for example in age, breed, size, personality, and history, promotes transference opportunities (Vidrine et al., 2002). Clients tend to be instinctively drawn to horses with similar characteristics to themselves, and identify with those which reflect one's description of self (Rothe et al., 2004; Trotter et al., 2008). Often verbalised descriptions of the horse are pure projections of one's own personality, issues, wants, and needs (Rothe et al., 2004). Therapeutic metaphors are also created through interactions with the horses and the client's interpretations of these. Behaviours, such as walking away, ignoring, being distracted, wanting to eat at the wrong time, biting and neighing, can be interpreted in relation to self, bringing forth transference reactions during therapy and allowing issues to surface (Klontz et al., 2007). Symbolic meanings are ascribed to represent those strong emotions and feelings which are difficult to express, and which are prone to repression (Trotter et al., 2008).

Horses, as prey animals, are instinctually hyper-vigilant and have a natural tendency to flee when scared (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz et al., 2007; Vidrine et al., 2002). This is particularly relevant in the EAP process with vulnerable individuals, who usually can relate to these behaviours. The therapist serves to "validate the normalcy and importance of the response of fear" during interactions with the horse, whilst helping participants establish trust

and a healthier ability to correctly identify, respond to, and cope with perceived threats in the environment (Rothe et al., 2004, p.377).

2.4.3.2 Why EAP?

EAP is described as offering an alternative understanding of and approach to emotional development – one that differs in many ways from traditional, more clinical therapies (Dimitrijević, 2009). It is thought to "assist participants in ways unique and sometimes superior to more passive counselling formats" (Trotter et al., 2008, p.255).

As clients are removed from their familiar surroundings, they are able to gain insights and learn new strategies for problem-solving through opportunities to which they may not have been previously exposed (Christian, 2005). Rather than taking place inside an office, working with horses can only occur in an outdoor, natural setting where there is ample space and usually much beauty (Dimitrijević, 2009). The effectiveness of EAP is often attributed to the unique therapeutic environment in which it occurs. These new surroundings promote cooperation from the participants who develop a sense of being "out of the office and engaged in solving life's problems" (Christian, 2005, p.65). It provides a safe and secure space that nurtures inner healing and encourages optimal growth and development (Trotter et al., 2008). Furthermore, it ensures clients move out of their comfort zones in order to discover new, healthier solutions and ways of doing things (Trotter et al., 2008).

A range of incidental learning opportunities may emerge within the unpredictable farm environment. Issues such as bad weather, horse illness, missing shoes, or dentist visits, for example, allow for problem-solving or additional learning experiences to occur (Vidrine et al., 2002). Furthermore, in learning about horse-care, participants are often able to learn more about themselves, and their own needs regarding health and personal well-being. Lessons related to boundaries and containment are also possible within the farm setting, as participants are exposed to the fences, stalls, arenas etc. put in place to manage the horses behaviours more appropriately within an open, spacious environment (Rothe et al., 2004). Within this context, the therapist is able to "role-model safe and respectful, yet firm and consistent limit-setting, and advocacy for the horse" (Vidrine et al., 2002, pg.596).

The inclusion of an animal as co-therapist is believed to immediately reduce anxiety, as well as to enhance client motivation, allowing for lively, enjoyable, and less stressful sessions (Dimitrijević, 2009). The unconditional acceptance received from a horse allows participants

to remove their "masks" within therapy and to reveal themselves fully, without fear of rejection (Trotter et al., 2008, p.255). This is believed to be the key to expressing one's true feelings and thus, to healing (Trotter et al., 2008).

EAP is considered particularly appropriate for those individuals who are described as "hard to reach" or who have not responded to traditional forms of therapy (Ewing et al., 2007, p.71). Working with developmentally or behaviourally challenged individuals requires imagination and an ability to incorporate creative methods to encourage participation (Ewing et al., 2007). The horse is seen as the vehicle through which attention is gained, discussions initiated, and the trust needed in therapy is established (Ewing et al., 2007).

2.4.3.3 Uses and Benefits of EAP

Today EAP is being used around the world and in several contexts to address a large variety of physical, psychological, and psychosocial challenges. Studies document effective interventions related to the treatment of: physical impairments or illnesses; substance abuse and addictions; eating disorders; interpersonal relationship difficulties; anxiety and phobias; depression; behavioural issues; emotional issues or disorders; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; and, developmental challenges, such as Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Down's Syndrome, and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (Dimitrijević, 2009; Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004).

The benefits of therapeutic horse-human interactions documented within the literature are far-ranging, and have an impact on the whole person (Dingman, 2008). Physical, psychological, psychosocial, spiritual and cognitive developments are explored, promoting EAP as a holistic approach (Dingman, 2008).

The modern-day child and adolescent spends a large amount of time indoors – watching television, listening to music, or playing video games, rather than running around outdoors or socialising (Dingman, 2008). EAP allows for healthy, spontaneous, and active recreation, exercise and play (Cumella & Simpson, n.d; Dingman, 2008.). It provides an opportunity for individuals to "experience earth's beauty in a renewed way" and creative freedom and spiritual growth occurs through these interactions with nature (Cumella & Simpson, n.d., p3). Physical benefits of horse-riding include improved muscle tone, balance, posture, coordination, strength, and flexibility, stimulated by the rhythmic, repetitive movements of

the horse (Dingman, 2008). This is particularly beneficial for individuals with physical disabilities.

The effects of EAP on self-confidence and self-esteem appear to be particularly significant. Children constantly receive directive messages reminding them what they should and should not be doing (Dingman, 2008). Horses, however, look to their handlers for direction and guidance, and in this way children are able to experience positive feelings of power and an ability to influence another living being (Dingman, 2008; Rothe et al., 2004). Horse-riding specifically is said to "make someone small feel large, long-legged and powerful" (Dingman, 2008, p.11). Through learning to interact with a large and "scary" animal, and mastering new horsemanship skills, an empowering "I can do it!" approach is often adopted, as well as an increased confidence for overcoming fears, taking risks, and trying new things (Cumella & Simpson, n.d., p.1; Dingman, 2008).

Many individual's report experiencing feelings of trust again as they learn to communicate, and develop an authentic relationship with a non-judgemental horse. This restoration of trust within a supportive and safe environment aids in helping the participant to also become more comfortable with humans, usually beginning with the therapist, volunteers and other members of the therapeutic team (Dingman, 2008). This is particularly valuable for those whose ability to trust has been violated, for example through abusive or unstable human relationships (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.).

Similarly, the unconditional acceptance received from the horse and the development of a positive relationship as a result, can be seen as the first safe step towards developing closer relationships with people (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.). EAP is associated with improved social relationships and social acceptance, and reduced feelings of loneliness or isolation (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Dingman, 2008; Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Strom & Wilson, 2009; Vidrine et al., 2002). Within group therapy, shared activities and interactions with the horses stimulate conversation and create easy social interactions and socialisation opportunities (Dingman, 2008; Rothe et al., 2004). In addition, safe and structured group interactions can help individuals realise that they are not alone, creating an experience similar to being in a support group (Strom & Wilson, 2009; Vidrine et al., 2002). Improved sensitivity towards others and relationship building skills are reported, resulting in increased feelings of social acceptance and peer popularity as participants are better able to make friends and interact with other people (Ewing et al., 2007). Empathy is also developed in this

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manner, as participants become genuinely concerned about the well-being of their group members, as well as the horses (Vidrine et al., 2007).

As working with horses depends on accurately reading the horse's non-verbal cues as well as clear, congruent communication, important skills are developed which are useful in human relationships (Rothe et al., 2004). Participants learn to be assertive, rather than aggressive or passive, in order to give direction to a large animal, and later begin to be able to apply this skill within their interactions with people (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.). An improved ability to resolve conflict and overall reductions in acts of hostility and aggression are documented outcomes of many EAP programs (Cumella & Simpson, n.d; Dingman, 2008; Ewing et al., 2007). The need to communicate in a calm and non-reactive manner with the horses also indirectly results in the development of greater self-control and impulse modulation (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Vidrine et al., 2002).

As a psychotherapeutic approach, EAP provides a unique environment in which clients are able to work through emotional traumas, psychological distress, or destructive patterns of behaviour (Klontz et al., 2007). Opportunities are created in which self-awareness is enhanced, and maladaptive behaviours, feelings and attitudes can be re-patterned, allowing participants to live more fully in the present (Klontz et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004). According to Mann and Williams (2002), improvements have been observed in behavioural and psychological disorders when years of conventional methods have failed to impact (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). A sense of perspective can be obtained through directing attention and interest outwards, towards the horse rather than towards self (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.).

Many more benefits of EAP have been reported in the literature, all of which cannot be discussed in detail here. Participants may experience the development of a more realistic self-concept through an awareness of one's own size and significance in relation to the horse (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.). Improvements in ability to maintain focus for long periods of time have also been reported, as well as improved abilities to think creatively and break down tasks into manageable steps in order to solve problems and reduced hyperactivity in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Ewing et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). Enhanced leadership skills, an increased sense of responsibility and greater displays of mutual respect are further benefits documented within the literature (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Trotter et al., 2008). Through learning to care for a horse, many individuals learn more

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about self-care and are able to apply knowledge obtained through grooming, veterinary and dentist visits, and involvement in feeding routines, for example, to themselves, being better equipped to meet their own basic needs (Rothe et al., 2004).

2.4.3.4 The EAP Process

Each EAP session is facilitated by a therapeutic team, usually consisting of a registered mental health professional (therapist), a certified horse professional, volunteers, and the horse(s) as co-therapist(s) (Christian, 2005; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Rothe et al., 2004). Occupational therapists, physiotherapists, physicians, psychiatrists, social workers, and other professionals may also form part of this interdisciplinary team, depending on the specific therapeutic context (Dimitrijević, 2009; Rothe et al., 2004). The psychotherapist is responsible for designing and implementing a program facilitating emotional development whilst also ensuring emotional safety (Christian, 2005). They should be knowledgeable and comfortable with horses, and through the horse-therapist relationship model open communication, respect, patience, understanding, consistency, and co-operation (Rothe et al., 2004; Vidrine et al., 2002).The horse professional ensures both the horses and participants remain safe within their interactions, and are always present and available to provide assistance depending on the needs of the horse, client, and therapist (Christian, 2005; Rothe et al., 2004). Volunteers, usually with horsemanship experience, are also involved to ensure participant and horse safety, and to assist in the acquisition of horse-related skills and responsibilities (Ewing et al., 2007).

Safety within sessions is enhanced by the presence of the horse professional and volunteers. Additional safety precautions include the compulsory wearing of hard-hats and other safety equipment whilst on horseback, as well as the careful selection and continuous schooling of EAP horses. Horses are specifically selected for EAP based on their individual characteristics and temperaments. Those used should be calm, easy to approach, able to accept people walking around all sides and touching all areas, aged, and halter-and-saddle trained (Klontz et al., 2007).

Participant screening is also necessary, as EAP may not be appropriate for everybody (Rothe et al., 2004). Individuals with deficits in balance, animal allergies, skeletal injuries, or who are significantly overweight may not be medically able to participate (Rothe et al., 2004; Vidrine et al., 2002). Clients may also not be psychologically or behaviourally fit to work

around large horses or in an outdoor setting which requires a certain amount of cooperation and discipline (Vidrine et al., 2002).

EAP is executed in various ways, depending on the practitioner's individual training or preferences, as well as the client(s) presenting issues (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). Individual or group therapy can occur, over a long-term or short-term period (Dimitrijević, 2009). Sessions are usually around two hours in length, and may occur once or twice weekly (Ewing et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). They often form part of a more comprehensive intervention program, which may include traditional talk-therapy, group-processing, as well as other activities not involving horses (Trotter et al., 2008). Some therapists may focus primarily on ground-based interactions in the group, whilst others incorporate horse-riding and horsemanship as part of the process (Rothe et al., 2004). It is essential however, that clients are clear that the work in which they are engaged is therapy, and not horsemanship training (Rothe et al., 2004).

Sessions usually consist of various activities in which horses are in some way incorporated – more directly at times than others. Participants may partake in equine related tasks such as feeding, haltering, grooming, tacking up, riding, vaulting, and longing, or they may learn about horse care, behaviour, and safety (Ewing et al., 2007; Klontz et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Trotter et al., 2008). They may observe horses in a herd, or discuss the interactions between horses and their environment, including those with humans and other species (Rothe et al., 2004). Clients are encouraged to take responsibility for their horse and are generally required to participate in all aspects of their care and handling (Ewing et al., 2007). They may also be delegated other farm chores (Rothe et al., 2004).

EAP tasks are combined with traditional counselling techniques and experiential therapy tools, such as role-play, mirroring, or gestalt techniques (Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). The psychotherapist aims to create a program to teach skills such as cooperation, trust, responsibility, non-verbal communication, assertiveness, creative thinking and problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork, as well as to assist in the development of healthy relationships, self-confidence, and positive attitudes (Ewing et al., 2007; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). Activities may symbolically re-create possible life situations, such as that with which a client may be struggling with (Trotter et al., 2008). They are designed so that they require the application of a particular skill or skills in order for the successful completion of the task (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). Counselling processing techniques may be applied by the

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psychotherapist at the end of each exercise or session, allowing for insights and knowledge gained to be transferred from the activity to the client's life (Trotter et al., 2008). Other aspects emerging from the process can be explored, such as inter-personal dynamics and role identification, and thus important life lessons can also be learnt (Trotter et al., 2005; Vidrine et al., 2002).

Often an ultimate goal is set at the beginning of the EAP process, towards which the participants strive. This may be to ride solo, to receive a certificate, or to perform at a graduation exhibition or show, in front of significant others (Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002).

2.4.4. EAP Research in South Africa

Although EAP has been used to support people with various psychological difficulties, the literature reveals a very limited amount of international and national research documenting these interventions (Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008). Despite this, it appears to be an approach which has attracted the attention of the psychological research community (Ewing et al., 2007).

A limited number of South African studies related to EAP could be found, although it appears that this is becoming an increasingly popular area of exploration. Van Heerden, (2013), explores the experiences of the client, therapist and parents when using EAP in a child sexual-abuse case. It was found to be a life-changing and empowering process for the client and her parents. Engaging with the horses assisted the client to express her emotions. Furthermore, being in nature and sensory stimulation were identified as contributing factors to the effectiveness of EAP. Within the study of Brand (2012), reduced levels of anger were documented amongst girls living in a children's home. Other findings attributed to the EAP process include an increased sense of acceptance and belonging, experiences of genuine friendship, improved confidence, and an improved ability to persevere through challenges arising at the stables. Helfer (2006), explores EAP for primary school children with physical difficulties. Apart from the physical benefits, improvements in confidence, self-esteem and concentration were identified. Participants also reported the formation of friendships with their peers, horses and helpers.

2.5 SUMMARY

Within this chapter, literature relevant to the inquiry was reviewed. Each of the components of the study was explored as separate entities in order to obtain the necessary insight into the phenomena under exploration and to help to contextualise the study. This provided the foundation from which I was able to explore the integration of these parts and thus answer my research question and sub-questions.

It was evident within the literature that there is clear need for psychotherapeutic support to be provided to children and adolescents placed in residential care. I have explored EAP as one such means of possible support. The Circle of Courage is also incorporated into this research as an evidence-based theory of development and resilience, forming the theoretical framework through which I investigate the EAP approach and the meaning it has for the participants involved.

Within the following chapter, I document the research process and discuss each of its various components.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROCESS OF INQUIRY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care, and the effect it may have on the well-being and socio-emotional development of those participating. Further attention is focused on the possible role of EAP in fostering resilience amongst vulnerable youth.

Given the above aims and intentions of the research, it will be made evident within this chapter as to why a qualitative case study design within the interpretive paradigm was purposefully selected as most appropriate for this study. Details of the process followed to answer the specific research questions will also be highlighted, in order to create a clear framework of what I hoped to achieve.

This chapter intends to clarify the practical, research-related aspects of this inquiry. A detailed description of the research process will be provided, with an emphasis on the paradigm applied; the research design, methodology and specific methods of data collection; methods of data analysis; and, the implementation of quality control measures to ensure trustworthy findings. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm can be defined as a "model" which provides "an overall framework for how we look at reality" (Silverman, 2010, p.109). It encapsulates the researcher's assumptions regarding the nature of the world, the individual's place in the world, and the possible relationships with or within that world (Hills & Mullet, 2000; Mertens, 2005). In other words, it describes the ontological, epistemological, and methodological nature of the research enquiry (Silverman, 2010).

Various paradigms can be identified, each representing different world views, and ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations (Mertens, 2005). This study is situated within the interpretive paradigm, as this allows for an exploration of the individual, subjective experiences and realities of vulnerable adolescents participating in EAP (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2005). In this manner, the research aims and questions can be addressed.

The ontological question focuses on the nature of reality – "that which is or can be known" (Maree, 2007, p.53). The interpretive paradigm rests on constructivist principles, and thus it is the belief of the researcher that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005). There is "no single, observable reality" or truth, but rather there are "multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event" (Merriam, 2009, p.8). According to Schwandt (2000), researchers should thus attempt to "understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who lived it" (as cited in Mertens, 2005, p.13). Within this study, I hoped to obtain the individual viewpoints of each of the participants, with the expectation that each would relate to me their own *personal* descriptions of the EAP process in which they had been involved. Despite having participated in the same therapy, as a group, it was assumed that each would have had unique experiences, as well as different interpretations of those experiences shared. Each individual originated from a different context, culture, and background, and possessed their own sets of beliefs, values, and views, amongst many other factors. Personal frames of reference have thus been formed, from which participants make sense of their experiences. Within the interpretive paradigm, these multiple realities are acknowledged and appreciated.

The epistemological dimension refers to the process through which the researcher comes to know these realities and knowledge (Maree, 2007). Epistemology can be defined as the theory of knowledge – what knowledge is, what counts as good knowledge, and how we get to know what we know (Greener, 2011). It focuses specifically on "the relationship between the inquirer and the known" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.12). Within an interpretive approach, active and personal interaction between the researcher and participants is required, as it allows for individual, subjective experiences and interpretations to be obtained and explored (Maree, 2007). This study attempted to capture the voices of the participants through direct contact. The relationships developed as a result of my active participation as a volunteer throughout their EAP journey allowed for these further, more personal interactions to occur during the formal data collection period. Within the context of working with vulnerable youth, many of whom have developed a significant mistrust of other people, this established relationship was particularly important (Katz, 1987). It was hoped that it would enable the participants to feel safe and comfortable in the research process and therefore speak freely, openly and honestly, allowing for accurate, quality data to be obtained.

The third dimension, methodology, focuses on the *processes* undertaken by the researcher to acquire knowledge and the "kind of tools and procedures" used to do so (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mouton, 2001, p.56). In order to obtain individual, subjective realities, as desired within the interpretive paradigm, an "idiographic" methodological approach is utilised, focussing "on the individual... with little (if any) emphasis on formulating general laws" (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2010, p.33). Interpretive, naturalistic methods of data collection acquired through researcher-participant interactions are thus preferred (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2005). Interviews were believed to be the most appropriate primary method of data collection within this particular study. They allowed for the participants to share their own subjective thoughts, opinions, experiences and feelings regarding the EAP process, and for the researcher to ascertain personal meanings and interpretations, through dialogue and further prompting or questioning. A focus group discussion following the initial analysis of the individual interviews served to enhance the active participation of the adolescents within the process, as well as ensure that a richer, verified ensemble of data was obtained. Interviews with the therapist and social worker in care of the adolescents, in conjunction with my personal reflections regarding the EAP process, as observed through my own eyes, were also added to the data, again to further allow for a thick description of the process to be presented, from multiple perspectives. Obtaining multiple perspectives and the use of multiple data collection strategies is encouraged within the interpretive paradigm in order to "yield better interpretations of meanings" that can be "compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange" (Mertens, 2005, p.15). In this way a more vivid and detailed exploration of the research questions could occur.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The selected research design provided a specific framework for the research process – one which was believed to be best suited in order to answer the research questions. Ragin (1994) defines a research design as "a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he has posed" (as cited in Flick, 2011, p.65). The purpose of the research, the context in which it takes place, the research paradigm, and, the techniques used, need to be considered and accommodated within the selected design (Strydom, 2011).

It was felt that a case study design would be most suited for this study. A case study involves an in-depth investigation into one specific case in order to gain insight into a particular issue

or theory – in this instance, EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach (Wasburn, 2007). It is not defined by any specific methodology, but rather by the object of study – "a specific, unique, bounded system" (Stake, 2000, p.436). Through this design, the wholeness and integrity of the case can be preserved as the researcher aims to present as precise a description or reconstruction of the specific phenomenon, or "unit of analysis" as possible (Flick, 2011; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2009, p.30).

A case study design was in line with my intention to concentrate solely on a specific bounded system, namely a group of adolescents taking part in an EAP program at a specific therapy site (Stake, 2008). As there are many variations of the EAP therapeutic approach, as well as different populations served, it was not possible within the scope of this research to capture the broad applications of EAP. However, by focusing on one specific application, valuable insights could still be obtained. In this way, the case was instrumental in nature. Through focusing on the case, an understanding of something else – EAP – could be facilitated (Stake, 2000). According to Stake (2000), although the case was still "looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinised and its ordinary activities detailed", this was done in order to "pursue the external interest" of EAP (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.445). Case studies can be particularly useful in instances, such as in this study, "when it is desirable to determine intervention outcomes or change in behaviour over time as a consequence of one or multiple interventions" (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011, p.310).

I have hoped to portray the experiences of the participants through a means similar to that of a story. By providing a rich description of the context in which these individuals are placed, as well as of the troubled pasts from which they have come, it enables us to more clearly understand how the EAP program fits into their lives, and the meanings and value it has for them. The case study design enabled this as it allowed for a detailed exploration of the nature of the case, its historical background, its physical setting, other contexts, and those informants through whom the case can be known (Stake, 2000).

3.4 METHODOLOGY

Methodology, as defined in section 3.2 above, focuses on how the researcher attempts to bring the unknown into the known, and the process undertaken to acquire knowledge (Mertens, 2005; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). According to Harding (1987), it involves "the theory of knowledge and the imperative framework guiding a particular research project" (as cited in Adendorff, 2007, p.26). It encapsulates more than simply the specific

methods or techniques used to generate data, although this does form a part of the overall methodological procedures (Hills & Mullet, 2000).

The selection of an appropriate methodology depends heavily on the researcher's view of the world and the nature of the research questions, as well as on practical aspects (Mertens, 2005). A qualitative approach was deemed to be most suitable to the interpretive nature of my case study design in which I wished to explore and depict in an open and flexible manner the experiences and associated meanings of the participants involved.

Qualitative research attempts to "collect rich descriptive data... with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied" (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2010, p. 50). The researcher is actively engaged in a dynamic process, in which different voices and perspectives are obtained through "interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2010, p.51). These interactions and their interpretations are "shaped by [the researcher's] personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity", as well as by those of the participants involved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.6). Qualitative research is an inductive approach, in which the researcher attempts to make sense of a situation "without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomena under study" (Mertens, 2005, p.230).

This approach resonates with the principles of an interpretive paradigm regarding the researcher's view of the world and the knowledge within. A qualitative researcher is "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed" and imparted on the phenomena of study (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2010; Merriam, 1998, p.6). They place emphasis on "the socially constructed nature of reality [and] the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.10). Qualitative studies acknowledge the multiple realities in existence and that these are context dependent (Mertens, 2005). Therefore they allow for descriptions and considerations of the contexts of the participants to be incorporated into the research (Flick, 2011).

It was felt that the primary and secondary research questions proposed by this study could best be addressed within a qualitative framework. According to Patton (2002), and relevant to this particular study, qualitative methods are most appropriate in situations where: the focus of the research is on the process of a program – in this case, EAP; the program emphasises individualised outcomes; detailed, in-depth information is needed about both the clients and

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the program; and, the intent is to understand the program theory and participant's beliefs regarding the nature of the problems they are addressing and how participation in EAP has led to desired outcomes.

The use of a qualitative research approach was also practical as, through intimate contact, personal data could be obtained within the boundaries of a safe and comfortable relationship. It was assumed that this would enable participants to talk more freely and openly, and thus their voices and viewpoints could be more accurately represented. In considering the backgrounds and current contexts of the participants involved, this was particularly important.

3.4.1 Entering the Research Context

As discussed in Chapter 1, my interest in the EAP field led to a Google search for local therapeutic centres where this approach is utilised. Only five centres were identified within the Western Cape. It was my intention to contact all five, with the hope that one would accept my research proposal and allow me to observe and document the process occurring at their site, as was planned in my original research design. However, after visiting the first centre, I was made to feel so welcome, and was so intrigued by the program on offer there, that I became entirely captivated and did not look any further. Lisa Baley, the therapist and owner at The Centre, was very enthusiastic about my research, as she felt it was high time for others to be made aware of the value of EAP.

My close relationship with The Centre began towards the end of 2011, where I became involved as a volunteer once a week. It was my intention to learn as much as I could about the program, before formally beginning my research. I had planned to volunteer up until the commencement of the data collection period, in which I would then work with a different group of adolescents with whom I had no previous contact, observing their EAP process over a period of about ten weeks. However, after working with one particular group, since the beginning of 2012, I had a change in plan. Rather than observing an unfamiliar group, I chose to rather interview and record the experiences of those within the group I had come to know so well. This amendment was proposed in order to gain more insight into the EAP process from the participants' own perspectives, rather than relying primarily on my interpretations of their experiences through observation. Although observations were initially proposed as a means to keep in line with the non-talk philosophy of EAP, suitable relationships had been

established through my weekly interactions with these adolescents at The Centre to allow for interviews to occur in a comfortable and non-threatening manner.

The Centre is a small and simple, yet beautiful stable-yard situated on the outskirts of Cape Town. It is run by Lisa Baley together with a yard manager. There are also always volunteers and other riders present who help to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. The primary population served at The Centre involves adolescents from various children's homes within Cape Town. A recent initiative involves the use of dogs to allow for younger members of these homes to also participate in animal assisted interventions. Riding lessons are on offer to the public on alternative days, in order to raise the funds required for the EAP programs to be made available to those in need.

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is defined by Durrheim (2006) as the decision-making process used by the researcher to select the participants for the study from the broad population. Within qualitative research, participants are "selected according to their relevance to the research topic" rather than "to construct a (statistically) representative sample of a general population" (Flick, 2011, p.55). Furthermore, an instrumental case study design requires the careful consideration and selection of a case which will allow for the greatest understanding of the phenomena being studied (Stake, 2000). Purposive sampling is thus necessary, as it allows for the selection of "information rich cases for in depth study", from places that best fit the research (Patton, 2002, p.230).

Purposive sampling is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p.77). It allows for the selection of a case that illustrates a specific feature or process of interest (Silverman, 2010). Purposive sampling was utilised in the selection of the *location* from which to conduct my research. I was actively involved in seeking out a setting where an EAP process could be studied, in order to be able to learn about this phenomenon.

The target population as well as the specific sample group was determined by the individuals participating in this process at the purposively selected location. The primary population served at The Centre is adolescents placed within residential care, and it is for this reason that this group became the focus of my study. Therefore, convenient sampling was also used. This

involves the selection of participants "on the basis of convenience" – those who are "easily and conveniently available" (Greener, 2011, p.64; Maree & Pietersen, 2007, p.177).

I decided to select one group of adolescents placed within residential care as the sample. As previously mentioned, it was initially my intention to observe an unfamiliar group over a period of time. However, after some time, I decided to rather interview a group with whom I had already been involved and established relationships with. This would enable them to share their experiences with me in a more open and honest manner. Thus, the process of acquiring a case was incidental rather than planned.

The sample included eight individuals of mixed gender, between the ages of 12 and 18. They had been participating in an EAP program at The Centre since February 2012 – for eight months, at the commencement of the data collection period. All of them had been placed within residential care, although for varying reasons, and therefore they each have had their own unique personal histories, life experiences, personal challenges etc. Their reasons for referral to the EAP program varied, and it was thus expected that it would have different meanings and value for each individual.

3.4.3 Methods of Data Collection

The process of data collection forms an integral component of the research process. Selected strategies should be "relevant and sufficient to answer a research question or query" as well as "appropriate to [the] research topic and the model with which you are working" (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011, p.187; Silverman, 2010, p.124). According to DePoy and Gitlin (2011), the following factors are essential to consider when selecting data collection methods: the researcher's paradigmatic framework; the nature of the research problem; the type of design; and, the practical limitations or resources available to the investigator.

In the context of this study, the above translated into the selection of methods which were congruent with a qualitative, interpretive paradigm and a case study research design. Within such a framework, methods needed to allow for the capturing of individual opinions, feelings and experiences (Wisker, 2008). Through the gathering and analysis of rich data conveying the subjective stories of the participants, the research questions could be appropriately explored. It was hoped that through the use of interviewing, focus-group discussions, and my personal reflections, insight into the EAP process and its meaning for those involved could be

obtained. Following this, further exploration regarding its role in the fostering of resilience could be deduced.

The data collection process in this study was divided into several phases. The pre-collection phase involved one of learning, for me, through undertaking a thorough literature review, spending much time observing the EAP process in action, and reflecting on this learning process. During this phase, the participants were actively involved in a psychotherapeutic process at The Centre. The following phase, the initial formal data-collection phase, involved obtaining their retrospective descriptions and personal narratives of their experiences, through individual interviews. The voices of those closely involved in their process were also obtained, namely those of the therapist and the social worker. My own retrospective reflections on what I had observed and experienced as part of the EAP team participating actively with the participants were also included. The final phase involved a focus-group discussion in order to thicken the stories, as well as to verify my analysis of the initial data.

The use of various data collection methods and the involvement of several participants, including the adolescents, social worker, therapist and myself, allowed for an "in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" to be obtained, from multiple perspectives (Flick, 2011, p.227). A multi-method approach is "a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.5). Triangulation or the use of multiple data collection techniques is useful for increasing the accuracy of the data acquired (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011).

3.4.3.1 Personal Reflections

My initial involvement with the participants of this study was as a volunteer during their weekly EAP sessions at The Centre. It was my aim, during this time, to come to better understand my subject of study, EAP, before going on to select an unknown group of research participants. However, as I bared witness to their experiences in EAP over the months, and as our relationships developed, I came to realise that they would be the ideal participants to help me in answering my research questions. They were selected as the unit of analysis of the case study.

This placed me in a difficult position, as my role shifted from volunteer to researcher. In essence, I had unknowingly filled the role of a participant observer, in which "the researcher becomes a participant in the situation being observed" and "immerses [herself] in a chosen

setting to get an insider perspective" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.85). However, I had not recorded any field notes whilst working with the group, which in hindsight may have been very valuable. I believed my perspectives could contribute to the illustration I wished to create of these adolescents' EAP experience in its entirety. Therefore, as I made this role-change, I took some time to reflect on my thoughts, feelings, observations and experiences from the past few months, writing them down in the form of a single reflective journal entry.

According to Hubbard and Power (2003), journal entries can be helpful in "observing patterns, themes and connections, analysing events, interpreting information and making tentative conclusions" (as cited in Butterfield, 2011, p.94). It was my specific intention to utilise this data to add to the stories of the participants, and to verify them or provide an additional perspective on an event or experience, thus enriching the case presented.

3.4.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012) in-depth qualitative interviews involve the efforts of the researcher to obtain rich and detailed information, relevant to the research question, which may include examples, experiences, narratives and stories. This is done through verbal communication, usually face-to-face and with one person (DePoy & Gitlin, 2011). Talking to others and listening to their experiences and opinions allows the researcher to "see the world through the eyes of the participant", gaining perspectives other than their own (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.87; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews serve as one of the most common and core forms of in-depth qualitative interviews (Dawson, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This technique allows for the researcher to find out specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information gained in other interviews in which the same questions are asked (Dawson, 2009). Although an interview schedule consisting of specific predetermined questions should be established beforehand, "with a semi-structured, open-ended interview there is... space for some divergence" and follow up questions can be asked, enriching the data gathered (Patten, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wisker, 2008, p.195).

The interviewer's questioning technique is of great importance. In order to collect "rich and descriptive data on the phenomenon being studied" 'yes' or 'no' questions should be avoided, and rather open-ended questions utilised (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.88). This involves the selection of questions which the "interviewee can respond any way he or she chooses,

elaborating upon answers, disagreeing with the questions, or raising new issues" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.29).

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the eight EAP participants. An interview schedule was devised (Appendix G) providing a list of open-ended questions serving to assist the participants in recounting their experiences and sharing their thoughts and feelings on their EAP process. The questions ultimately served to provide opportunity for information to be obtained which could be useful in the exploration of the research questions outlined for this study. A conversational approach, similar to that characterising my many previous interactions with each of the adolescents, was maintained during the interviews. This enabled a safe, non-threatening atmosphere which I hoped would enable the individuals to feel comfortable to answer the questions and share their stories openly and honestly. Each interview lasted an average of thirty to forty minutes, and was conducted either in the quiet and sound-proofed therapy room at the children's home, or in the garden, depending on the weather conditions and individual preferences.

The voices of both the social worker and the therapist were also obtained through semi-structured interviewing. Through a series of questions (Appendix H) and with the necessary consent, the social worker was able to share the background stories of the participants with me. This I felt would be essential in order to be able to fully grasp the personal necessity for their involvement in EAP and the meaning it had for each adolescent. It provided context to the data obtained from the participants through their interviews, and thus added to the richness of the case study. I chose to obtain this information from the social worker rather than the participants themselves in order to avoid any possible negative emotional reactions or adverse effects that could be caused through sharing their traumatic histories with me. Furthermore, this would require great trust and I could not expect this from the adolescents purely based on our previously established *non-therapeutic* relationships. It would very likely have brought into conflict the roles of therapist and researcher. The social worker was also asked to provide a brief summary of what she felt EAP meant for each of the individuals. As somebody who works with the adolescents every day, her perspective was valuable not only to verify their stories, but to add to them as an outsider witness (Carey & Russel, 2003).

The therapist was interviewed in order to provide specific information regarding the EAP process under study. Her knowledge on the approach, in conjunction with her aims and goals in this specific case as well as an outline of the process which occurred served to further add

context, better illustrate the case study, and inform the research questions. Her subjective experiences regarding this specific group of clients were not included in order to respect her role as therapist and the ethical principles of client confidentiality. Furthermore, this would not be congruent with the nature of this research, in which it was the adolescents' personal experiences in which we were most interested. A semi-structured interview guide was used to guide this interview (Appendix I).

3.4.3.3 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group, also referred to as a discussion group or group interview, involves several participants coming together to discuss a certain issue or topic (Dawson, 2009). The researcher fulfils the role of a moderator or facilitator, who encourages group interaction through asking pre-determined, open-ended questions and controlling digressions (Dawson 2009; Greener, 2011; Krueger & Casey, 2009). Groups typically consist of between 6 to 12 participants as "the group must be small enough for everyone to have opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p.6; Patten, 2004). Participants are similar to each other in a way that is important to the purpose of the research and the specific research questions (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

The purpose of a focus group is to "promote self-disclosure among participants" in order to gain insight into how people really think or feel about an issue or service (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p.4). In order to assist in this process, the facilitator "tries to create a non-threatening environment in which all group members feel free to express their opinions, attitudes and experiences even if they differ from those of other participants" (Patten, 2004, p.155). Focus groups are generally most valuable when participants "feel comfortable, respected and free to give their opinion without being judged" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p.4). Key moderating skills are necessary in order to facilitate an effective focus group discussion. These include: respect for the participants, and an ability to convey this respect; a thorough understanding of the purpose of the study and the topic; an ability to communicate clearly; and researcher openness rather than defensiveness (Krueger and Casey, 2009). Furthermore the facilitator needs to have the skills to manage difficult situations such as participant disagreement, insensitivity or a lack of respect for individual opinions or experiences, or domineering group members (Barbour, 2008).

Focus groups allow for the "production of shared meaning" as participants can discuss topics and construct meaning within the group whilst the interviewer plays a reduced role (Greener,

2011, p.77). The focus group method is helpful in that it may stimulate more in-depth conversation and it may assist certain members in a group to overcome their inhibitions to speak openly about their experiences. Furthermore, it may help individuals remember aspects they might have otherwise forgotten (Dawson, 2009; Greener, 2011). Focus group discussions may also serve to confirm, verify or invalidate data especially that which was obtained from participants who may have been tired, bored, restless or uncomfortable, thus compromising the honesty of their responses.

The use of focus groups to access narratives has been cautioned against however, as several people competing to share their personal stories or opinions can produce data that is hard to order and attribute to speakers, and thus difficult to analyse (Barbour, 2008). The researcher needs to pay caution to domineering participants as well as the contamination of individual views through the sharing of more dominant stories. It is their role to encourage all participants to engage in the discussion and manage disruptive or ineffective proceedings accordingly (Dawson, 2009; Greener, 2011).

A focus group discussion was selected as a data collection method for this study in order to provide as rich a representation of the case as possible. This method was advantageous as it allowed for the further construction of meaning amongst the group; a greater input of ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences, and continued acquisition of multiple perspectives. An opportunity for "member-checking" was provided, in which I was able to clarify with the participants if I "got it right" – if my interpretations were accurate reflections of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.221). Furthermore, it allowed for triangulation to occur – a process in which findings are drawn from several sources and through the use of several methods, thus ensuring increased trustworthiness (Wisker, 2008).

An interview schedule was devised based on the initial analysis of the primary data source – the individual participant interviews. It was my intention to seek further information about certain topics and themes which emerged; clarify ambiguous or contradictory data; and, to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of the data and my newfound understandings of their EAP experiences with the participants. The discussion was conducted at the children's home and was verbally recorded. The recording was transcribed verbatim, and following analysis, this data was integrated with the other sources to encapsulate a more detailed exploration of the research questions.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis can be defined as the process of systematically searching through and organising the collected data in a manner that increases the researcher's understandings of it and enables them to present what they have discovered to others (Boeije, 2010). It involves 'a "breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units" and the reassembling or reconstruction of the data "in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion" (Boeije, 2010, p.76).

Within a qualitative, interpretive paradigm, the researcher strives to "establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.99). Thus, an inductive method of analysis is utilised as the findings "emerge through consideration and analysis of the data" (Patten, 2004, p.159). As is characteristic of qualitative research, "the researcher starts with the data and progresses to develop theories based on their interpretations of it" (Patten, 2004, p.159). An approach in which multiple realities are considered is congruent with a qualitative, interpretive paradigm (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The inductive data analysis process involves "segmenting the data into parts and reassembling the parts again into a coherent whole" (Boeije, 2010, p.76). To aid this process, the data should first be formatted in a way that can be easily analysed, for example as a transcription, a table or graph (Dawson, 2009). The researcher should then proceed by immersing themselves in the data in order to become familiar with it and to allow for accuracy during interpretation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As good analysis is dependent on a thorough understanding of the data, it is important to re-listen to and re-read recordings and texts, before beginning to interpret it and analyse it in greater depth (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

The segmenting of data can be defined as the "unfolding, unravelling, breaking up... or fragmenting" of data into relevant categories (Boeije, 2010, p.77). It involves "indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it" (Gibbs, 2007, p.38). Each category is described using a "code" or label that "depicts the core topic of a segment" (Boeije, 2010, p.95). Lewins and Silver (2007) describe coding as "the process by which segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category" (Boeije, 2010, p.95). Data is "examined for distinct,

separate segments (such as the ideas or experiences of the participants)" which are then "identified by type and coded with individual names" (Patten, 2004, p.159). According to Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (2007), "open coding" as described above, can be seen as "the first step in moving beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytic interpretations" (as cited in Boeije, 2010, p.95-96).

In the following phase "the pieces that are believed to belong together are combined" in order to "generate theoretical understanding of the social phenomenon under study in terms of the research questions" (Boeije, 2010, p.76-77). Reassembling, also known as "synthesizing, structuring, integrating… or, recombining" involves "looking for patterns, searching for relationships between the distinguished parts, and finding explanations for what is observed" (Boeije, 2010, p.76). This process can also be termed "thematic analysis" as themes which emerge from the data are identified and interpreted (Dawson, 2009, p.119). According to Strauss and Corbin (2007), "axial coding" is utilised in which "data [is] put back together in new ways... by making connections between categories" (as cited in Boeije, 2010, p.108).

The segmentation and reassembling process encourages an "integrative interpretation" of the data, which "brings meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, and categories" and allows for the creation of a "story line that makes sense and is engaging to read" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.219). The researcher should thus "select the most useful data segments to support the emerging story" and "to illuminate the questions being explored" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.219).

Although the qualitative data analysis process outlined above appears to involve distinct phases, it is in fact "an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process" with "few rigid rules and procedures" (Dawson, 2009, p.115; Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.99). The comprehensive researcher is likely to "analyse as the research progresses, continually refining and reorganising in light of the emerging results" (Dawson, 2009, p. 116). It can be described as a "messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating" process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.207). It often involves "comparative analysis", in which "data from different people is compared and contrasted" (Dawson, 2009, p.120).

The data analysis is said to be complete when no new categories or themes emerge, and "saturation" has been reached (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p.317). The final product of the analysis process involves "descriptions that are more or less theoretical as well as interpretive explanations of the research subject" (Boeije, 2010, p.94).

In order to allow for the rich elements of my interview data to emerge, I followed each of the stages as outlined above, engaging in a comprehensive and thorough data analysis process. I came to be familiar with the data through first listening to the recordings whilst making transcriptions, and then re-listening to them and re-reading the text. A process of coding was then followed, in which I attempted to identify the different themes or patterns emerging from the data, and organise them into categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text. Following this, I looked for larger categories which encapsulated the various themes, bringing them together to explain the findings and attach meaning and significance to the analysis (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Although each participant's interview was analysed separately, the findings are combined in Chapter 4, in order to present a comprehensive representation of EAP and the experiences of the case-study group as a whole. A similar data analysis process was followed in order to explore themes emerging from both the focus group interview as well as my personal reflections, and these were incorporated into the integrated findings presented in Chapter 4.

Data obtained from the social worker to gain insight into the background of the participants' involved was analysed in a less rigorous manner. I initially listened to and transcribed the interview recording, familiarising myself with the data. I then summarised it into paragraphs which conveyed the stories of those involved. No interpretation of the data occurred, but rather it was simply presented in a condensed form in order to provide the necessary context of the case-study. In the same way, the background information about The Centre, as obtained through the interview with the therapist, was summarised and presented in merely a more concise format.

3.6 ENSURING THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY RESEARCH

The familiar scientific terms reliability and validity refer to the evaluation of the quality of research within conventional, objective and positivist research paradigms (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). However, the criteria on which these are based may be considered less suitable within an interpretive and post-positivist research framework as validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work (Shenton, 2004). According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), these constructs can be substituted with alternative criteria to be considered by researchers "in pursuit of a trustworthy study", namely: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Shenton, 2004, p.64).

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility is used in preference to internal validity and, according to Bradley (1993), refers to "the adequate representation of the constructions of the social world under study" (as cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.6; Shenton, 2004). It relates to the congruency of the findings with reality, whilst at the same time acknowledging that "reality is subjective and that there are many perspectives which influence it" (Merriam, 1998; Strydom, 2011, p.67). Techniques employed to ensure credibility in research may include: prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation, checking interpretations against the raw data, peer debriefing, member checking, and providing transparency with regards to the processes for coding and drawing conclusions from raw data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability replaces the constructs of external validity and generalizability in describing the extent to which the findings of the researcher can be applied to another context (Shenton, 2004; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2006). As the findings of a qualitative inquiry "are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals" it may prove challenging to "demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations" (Shenton, 2004, p.69). However, if sufficient thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation are provided and readers are able to gain a clear understanding of it, they can make their own judgements about the findings' transferability to different settings or contexts (Shenton, 2004; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Stake (2000) and Denscombe (1998) emphasise that "although each case may be unique, it is also an example within a broader group and, as a result, the prospect of transferability should not be immediately rejected" (as cited in Shenton, 2004, p.69).

3.6.3 Dependability

The term "reliability" within a positivist paradigm refers to the determination of whether or not similar results would be obtained "if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants" (Shenton, 2004, p.71). However, according to Florio-Ruane (1991), qualitative research rests upon the assumption that "the investigator's observations are tied to the situation of the study" and therefore exact or similar replications of such a study may not be possible (as cited in Shenton, 2004, p.71). Dependability is an alternative term which rather refers to "whether a study's research design can be used in other

studies and what procedures have been followed" (Strydom, 2011, p.67). It involves reporting on the research process in enough detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the work, although not necessarily to gain the same results, as well as to allow "the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed" (Shenton, 2004, p.71).

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the issue of neutrality or objectivity within the research (Strydom, 2011). It is defined by Bradley (1993) as "the extent to which the characteristics of the data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or review the research results" (as cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.6). Within qualitative inquiry it is essential that the experiences and ideas of the participants are communicated so that the findings "reflect the meaning intended by the participants, rather than the preconceptions of the researcher" (Strydom, 2011, p. 68). Triangulation and keeping an accurate audit trail are useful techniques which can be employed in order to ensure investigator bias effects are reduced (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, reflexivity allows for the researcher to acknowledge his or her own predispositions and mitigate their influences within the research process (Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Strydom, 2011)

3.6.5 Quality Assurance Strategies

There are many challenges which may compromise the quality of a qualitative research study. These include researcher bias, participant reactivity, data manipulation and the issue of transferability. It is the responsibility of the effective qualitative researcher to employ certain strategies in order to ensure that such challenges may be overcome. Numerous strategies are discussed in depth within research-based literature, some of which I chose to utilise within my specific study.

3.6.5.1 Triangulation

Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, can be defined as the collection of data "in as many different ways and from as many diverse sources" as feasible in an attempt to gain a "better understanding of a phenomenon by approaching it from several different angles" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p.287). The triangulation of paradigms, methodologies, methods, researchers, sources, amongst other factors, can occur (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Patton, 2002).

Within my research, I made use of multiple methods of data collection in order to promote research credibility. Furthermore, various opinions and perspectives were obtained through the voices of the EAP participants, the social worker, the therapist, and the researcher. It was hoped that through the triangulation of data the subjective experiences of the participants could be most accurately represented.

3.6.5.2 Peer Examination

Through peer examination, or presenting one's work-in-progress to others, the researcher is provided with the opportunity to receive feedback regarding different perspectives as well as areas of concern or strengths (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) coined this term, defining it as "exposing oneself to a disinterested peer… for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit in the inquirer's mind" (as cited in Barber & Walczak, 2009, p.3).

As this research formed part of a Master's Thesis, academic supervision was required, allowing for peer examination to occur. Many conversations between supervisor and researcher occurred throughout the full research process with the intention of maximising the quality of the research produced.

3.6.5.3 Audit Trail

An audit trail forms an essential part of a comprehensive and quality research study as it provides an account for the reader which explains in detail how the findings were arrived at. It can be summarised as a "running record of your interactions with the data as you engage in analysis and interpretation" (Merriam, 2009, p.223). Readers need to be provided with adequate information allowing for them to form alternative opinions, or to disconfirm the researcher's conclusion (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The absence of such detail allows for a convincing final account to be presented in which any arbitrary, puzzling, or contradictory aspects are omitted (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). According to Miles and Huberman (1984), "unless the researcher leaves a trail and describes in detail what is done, the reader is left at the mercy of the researcher's ability to smooth over the cracks" (as cited in Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.377).

An in-depth exploration of the research process has been documented in Chapter's 1 and 3 in this text allowing for the reader to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the findings were obtained. Furthermore, examples of the data as well as the analysis process have been

attached in Addenda J and K. Through increasing the transparency of the process followed, the reader should be provided with adequate information to determine for themselves the extent to which the findings are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

3.6.5.4 Reflexivity

Qualitative research situated within an interpretive, constructivist paradigm acknowledges the active and dynamic role of the researcher in the process of inquiry. Reflexivity is thus required to minimise the effects of researcher subjectivity and bias on the study. This involves an exploration of "how our positions and interest as researchers affect all stages of the research process" (Jootun, McGhee & Marland, 2009, p.42). It is defined by Parahoo (2006) as "the continuous process of reflection by the researcher on his or her values, preconceptions, behaviour or presence… which can affect the interpretation of responses" (as cited in Jootun et al., 2009, p.42).

A reflective diary recording the thoughts and ideas of the researcher throughout the process can be used to encourage self-awareness (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2010). Due to the changes in the research design that occurred during this study, maintaining a diary was not possible. However, careful consideration of subjective motives and interpretations occurred. Furthermore, issues of reflexivity were also explored and addressed through supervision.

3.6.5.5 Thick Descriptions

The use of "thick descriptions" through the presentation of descriptive, detailed findings allows for the transferability of the research to be gauged by the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002, p.437). Detailed accounts of the context and research methods, examples of raw data, and "a rich and vigorous presentation of the findings, with appropriate quotations", allows for the reader to make their own interpretations and conclusions, including those related to the transferability of the study to other contexts (Houghton et al. 2010, p. 16).

The use of the case study design in this study is particularly useful in that it encourages the presentation of thick descriptions. A detailed account of the research context is provided, which includes participant background information as well as insight into EAP and The Centre as one therapy site. A comprehensive exploration of the findings is documented in Chapter 4, and these are discussed in further depth in Chapter 5. The research process and

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methods used are also made transparent in Chapters 1 and 3, and raw data has been included in Addenda J and K.

3.6.5.6 Member Checking

Member checking allows for the verification of data as participants are provided with an opportunity to check the researcher's interpretation and presentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301). It involves "giving participants opportunities to correct errors, challenge interpretations and assess results" (Reilly, 2013, p.18).

Within this research, participants were asked to determine the extent to which their voices and meanings were most accurately represented. A focus group discussion allowed for the emerging themes to be explored and verified following the initial data analysis process. Participants were thus presented with an opportunity to disconfirm inaccurate findings and to elaborate on those which they felt were important to them. In this manner, the research credibility was strengthened.

3.6.5.7 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling involves the selection of a sample based on "your own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research aims" or "based on your judgement and the purpose of the study" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p.166).

Purposive sampling techniques were utilised within this research as a means of aiding study credibility and transferability. It allowed for the intentional selection of participants who would best be able to represent the larger population being explored, namely adolescents in residential care (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

3.6.5.8 Prolonged Engagement

Research credibility is enhanced as the researcher invests sufficient time into developing their understanding of the phenomena being investigated (Driessen, van der Vleuten, Schuwirth, van Tartwijk & Vermunt, 2005; Houghton et al., 2010). This can occur through prolonging the period of time observing and gathering data in the field, and by spending ample time engaging with the data obtained (Houghton et al., 2010).

I was fortunate to be able to spend several months observing the participants engaging in the EAP process. My prolonged involvement at The Centre and interactions with the participants

enabled me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic of exploration prior to beginning the data collection and analysis process.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the above text, the nature of the study has been explored in depth in order to ensure the production of meaningful research. However, an additional component of quality research, particularly within the social sciences, includes that which complies with the highest ethical standards. Principles for ethical research practice are outlined in numerous documents, including the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) Rules of Conduct Pertaining Specifically to the Profession of Psychology (2006) and the Framework Policy for the Assurance and Promotion of Ethically Accountable Research at Stellenbosch University (Stellenbosch University, 2009). Other guidelines also need to be maintained to ensure the well-being of research participants, for example those stipulated by the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (2010), the Bill of Rights within the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996 (1997), and the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2010).

3.7.1 An Ethical Framework

Terre Blanche et al. (2006) promote the selection and use of an ethical framework "structured to deal with the various stages of implementing a research project" (Terre Blanch et al., 2006, p.69). One such framework, presented by Emanuel et al. (2004), discusses eight practical principles "likely to enhance the ethical standing and, probably the scientific value of research" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.69). Although initially constructed for quantitative designs, it is emphasised that "participants in qualitative research are entitled to the same protections and respect as those in quantitative research" and therefore all eight principles can apply to such research too (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.76). I selected this framework to guide my ethical decision making processes throughout my research as it appeared to be thorough and practical to apply. Each of the principles, as applied to my study, is discussed as follows.

3.7.1.1 Collaborative Partnership

This study was conducted in collaboration with both the primary and secondary participants who were actively involved in sharing their thoughts and feelings regarding the topic being explored. Sensitivity to culture, respect and tailoring of the research to the population

involved was emphasised and reflected upon continuously (Sieber, 1992). It is hoped that the benefits of the research will extend into the target community or population.

3.7.1.2 Social Value

The findings documented within this study may offer those engaged in the helping professions an alternative therapeutic approach to assist vulnerable adolescents to overcome the emotional challenges they experience. It is hoped that the participants as well as other individuals can benefit from the knowledge obtained through the exploration of the research questions.

3.7.1.3 Scientific Validity

Within this research, a rigorous and scientifically sound methodology was applied to ensure the production of quality research. Stringent supervision was obtained throughout in order to further ensure the competence of the researcher.

In line with the Rules of Conduct Pertaining Specifically to the Profession of Psychology, points 9.21 and 9.2.2, (HPCSA, 2006), the findings presented in this study have in no way been fabricated, falsified or plagiarised, but rather they have emerged as a result of a comprehensive research process designed and conducted by the researcher.

3.7.1.4 Fair Selection of the Study Population

The utilisation of purposive sampling techniques allowed for the selection of participants adequately representative of the target population. A group of adolescents were selected based on their applicability to the research question rather than their accessibility and/or vulnerability.

3.7.1.5 Favourable Risk/Benefit Ratio

The supervision process as well as independent ethical review ensured that no overt risks were posed to the participants as a result of their engagement in this study. The social worker responsible for the well-being of the adolescents was involved in the entire research process, and thus I was able to consult with her should I have felt that the well-being of any of the participants was compromised. Furthermore, the EAP sessions were facilitated by the therapist, also responsible for managing any discomfort that may have arisen during the time. Volunteers were actively involved in the weekly sessions to ensure no risk was placed on the

individuals whilst working with the horses. The above-mentioned strategies served to minimise possible risks and harms of the research to the participants. It was intended for the research process to be a safe, comfortable and exciting experience for those involved.

The benefits of the research include the production of new, local insights into EAP. Through this, it is hoped that the benefits and disadvantages of such an approach can be highlighted, allowing professionals to make informed decisions regarding EAP, possibly resulting in more vulnerable individuals gaining access to meaningful support. The opportunity for the adolescents involved to be able to share their experiences and have their perspectives form part of a study can be seen as beneficial too as this could have positive self-worth implications.

3.7.1.6 Independent Ethical Review

Independent ethical review assists in the protection of the participants whilst also enhancing the quality of the research produced. It is "fundamentally concerned with assuring that the dignity of human participants is respected, and is not abused or violated in the search for knowledge, scientific progress, or, more mundanely, for career advancement" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.77).

This study was determined to be 'Medium Risk' following the initial review of the research proposal by the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) at Stellenbosch University. The proposal was thus submitted to the university's Research Ethics Committee for Human Research (REC) and permission was granted for the commencement of the data collection process (Appendix A). The proposal was then resubmitted as several alterations to the research methodology were made. Data collection occurred only once clearance had been re-obtained from the REC.

3.7.1.7 Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all relevant parties prior to the commencement of the research process. Such parties include: the host organisation (The Centre), the therapist, the social worker, and each of the participants and their legal guardian. Each individual was provided with a document outlining in detail the relevant aspects of the study, including the nature of the research and the responsibilities of everyone involved. Consent was obtained for participation in the various data collection processes, for voice-recordings and transcriptions to be made, and for the findings of the study to be documented in the form

of a thesis. Furthermore, permission was requested from the adolescents (and legal guardian) for background information to be obtained. It was emphasised that their participation was of a voluntary nature and that they could decline or withdraw at any point. On agreement, they were requested to sign their document and a duplicate was made for each of them. It was ensured that the language in which the consent form was presented was reasonably understandable to all concerned. Furthermore, it was read out and discussed with the group of adolescents in order to confirm understanding.

At present, there is "no clear legal statute specifying when children can independently consent to research" (Strode, Slack, & Essack, 2010, p.247). However, as children under the age of 18 are considered to be legal minors within South African law, the consent of their legal guardian was also sought to avoid any complications in this regard (Children's Act 38 of 2005, 2006; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 0f 1996, 1997).

Examples of the informed consent documents presented to the primary and secondary participants can be found in Addendum's B-F.

3.7.1.8 On-going Respect for Participants and Study Communities

All efforts were made to treat each participant involved with the utmost respect and to ensure the protection of their rights and welfare. This was in line not only with the researcher's personal belief system but also with the codes and guidelines for ethical practice in Psychology.

Confidentiality and anonymity were two important factors to consider in respecting the privacy and dignity of the participants. All personal information and perspectives were protected through the use of pseudonyms and the alteration of identifying details. Furthermore, all data obtained including the interview transcriptions and voice-recordings have been stored safely in a room to which only the researcher has access, and they will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer needed.

3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter served to provide an in-depth discussion regarding the process of inquiry. The research paradigm framing this study was explored, followed by a detailed outline of the research design and methodology, as well as of the data analysis approach utilised. Methods applied to ensure the production of quality research were also highlighted. The final

discussion topic involved the ethical considerations related to this study and the strategies put in place to ensure participant well-being was maintained through the implementation of the highest ethical research practices and standards.

The research findings obtained as a result of the research process described above are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

An exposition of the research findings is presented in an attempt to answer the research questions as outlined in Chapters 1 and 3. The primary question involves an exploration into how EAP affects the lives of adolescents living in residential care. Secondary research questions are as follows:

- How do adolescents living in residential care experience EAP?
- How does EAP foster resilience?

The data obtained through the use of various collection methods was analysed and the emerging themes and perspectives of the various participants integrated into the case study below. The background information of the participants and how they came to be involved in EAP, as well as an outline of their specific therapeutic process, has also been included here in order to broaden the context of the findings. It is hoped that this will assist the reader to better understand the meaning EAP has had in each of the adolescents' lives. The findings have, as far as possible, been documented in a sequential manner, in order to depict the journey as experienced by the participants.

4.2 PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

In order to provide a cursory view of the primary participants, their biographical particulars are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Biographical information of the primary participants

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Age during participation	Gender	Years in placement	Age of placement	Language-cultural group
Arno	14	Male	3	11	Afrikaans, White
MJ	16	Male	3	13	Swahili, Black
Jamie	17	Male	11	7	Afrikaans, Coloured
Willow	13	Female	3	11	English, Coloured
Selena	13	Female	7	7	Afrikaans, Coloured
Everdeen	12	Female	2	10	English, Coloured
Troy	17	Male	13	5	Xhosa/Afrikaans, Black
Randy	13	Male	8	5	Xhosa, Black

4.3 HOW THE PARTICIPANTS CAME TO BE INVOLVED AT THE CENTRE

The social worker, Justine, became aware of the EAP program being offered at The Centre through a discussion with a fellow member of the professional forum to which she belonged. This colleague mentioned that the children under her care had been participating in the therapy and it appeared to have had much benefit for them. Justine was encouraged to meet with Lisa Baley, which she found to be a positive and inspiring experience. Funding possibilities were explored and confirmed, and the appropriate permission sought from The

Home. Eight participants were selected, each for their own personal reasons, and the group began at The Centre in February 2012.

4.4 WHY THE EAP PROGRAM WAS SELECTED FOR THESE ADOLESCENTS

According to Justine, the EAP program offered an alternative to the traditional clinical therapeutic approach. Within her professional community, this is believed to be less effective for individuals who have had so many different people coming in and out of their lives. Justine herself experienced difficulties in forming open and trusting relationships with those under her care. Furthermore, accessing individual therapy for each of the adolescents posed a great challenge. She saw EAP as a program that could work on all the life spaces of the child, in line with the Circle of Courage philosophy maintained by child care workers, as well as one which could reach more children. Through their weekly participation, she hoped she would be able to develop closer relationships with each of the group members and help them to learn to trust her in their space. It was also hoped that a sense of belonging could be created, particularly for those who seemed to be more isolated and withdrawn, or who had not developed any significant attachments despite having lived at the home for several years. An additional goal for participation in EAP was to help reduce the high levels of aggression amongst the adolescents in the home.

4.5 PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND STORIES

The individual background stories presented below were described to me by Justine, with the consent of the participants involved.

4.5.1 Arno

Arno was removed from his mother's care following incidents of abuse by his older brother. Furthermore, his mom's own experiences of mental illness resulted in Arno playing the role of her confidante and emotional pillar, and a dysfunctional attachment developed. Although Arno cares for his mother, he also harbours great resentment towards her because of his own experiences of abuse and emotional neglect from which she was unable to protect him.

At the time of selection for participation in the program, Arno could be described as socially awkward. He lacked confidence and had no friends within the home. Furthermore, the friendships he developed at school had a negative influence on him. During his time at the

children's home, he has engaged in self-mutilating behaviours. It was for these reasons that Justine felt he would benefit from attending the program at The Centre.

4.5.2 MJ

MJ, together with his three sisters and father, spent near to two years travelling through Africa, from their home in Burundi to South Africa. A decision was made to leave because of the political unrest, yet they experienced much xenophobia and violence on their journey. Shortly prior to this, MJ's mother had been murdered, in front of his eldest sister. This was a significant loss to the family. His father remarried, to his wife's sister, which resulted in feelings of resentment amongst the children. On arriving in South Africa, the family lived on the streets as they were unable to afford any form of accommodation. The children were removed and taken to a place of safety, before being placed at The Home by the Children's Court. MJ's father currently lives in a house in Cape Town. However, he is unable to financially support MJ and his siblings. Rather, they visit him every alternate weekend and during the school holidays.

MJ wasn't initially chosen to participate in the program as he tended to 'fly under the radar'. As an introverted, reserved and quiet individual, it was not overtly evident that he was experiencing difficulties. However, on the day of the first visit to The Centre, the member who had initially been chosen was not available. Justine offered the opportunity to MJ, who was at first very hesitant. In hindsight, Justine feels that he was an ideal participant as he had avoided making any connections with any of the staff at The Home and therefore he had not established any relationships from which he could obtain support when he needed it.

4.5.3 Jamie

Jamie was placed in the children's home when he was 7 years old. At this stage, he was found to be living on the streets with his parents and therefore he was removed from their care. Following his placement at the home, he lost all contact with his parents. Several years later they reappeared and made contact with him. This was a difficult time for Jamie as not only was he battling with feelings of rejection and resentment towards his parents, but he also had to readjust to having them as part of his life. He was now expected to return to them during weekends and holidays, where they stayed in an impoverished area with very poor social and economic circumstances. He had, over time, become accustomed to staying with the wealthier, educated and more nurturing families of his school friends during his free time,

and had, in a sense, become elevated in society to a position where he felt confident, secure and content. This readjustment and his parent's sudden reappearance led to much anger. He experienced a sense of confusion regarding his identity and a shattered sense of belonging.

Prior to beginning at The Centre, Jamie had made several requests for therapeutic support. He had been prescribed anti-depressants, and was failing many of his school subjects. As he was in his last year at school, Justine was keen to provide him with additional support in order to help him work through some of his emotional difficulties but also to develop the skills he would require as an independent young adult.

4.5.4 Willow

As a child, Willow was placed in the care of her grandmother as her mother decided she could not look after her – she heavily abused alcohol and had no fixed accommodation. Following the passing of her gran, she spent some time living with a family friend. However, she was later placed in the children's home due to continuous behavioural concerns which were compromising her safety. Whilst this friend was at work, she would spend much of her day wandering the streets and return long after her curfew. She refused to abide with many of the house rules.

Willow longed to live with her mother who was not prepared to change her personal circumstances. As a result, she experienced much hurt and frustration, and her behaviours resembled those of a child with an attachment disorder. At The Home she became overly affectionate and clingy, and would become deeply upset when reprimanded. She struggled to respect the personal space of others and was unable to recognise non-verbal patterns of communication. This affected her interpersonal relationships as she would often mistake feelings such as anger, disappointment or joy, and regularly misperceive acts of supposed injustices towards her. It was Justine's intention for Willow to participate in EAP in order to develop a sense of belonging and healthier attachments, and to learn to better understand relationship and communication patterns.

4.5.5 Selena

At the age of 6, Selena witnessed the murder of her mother by someone she was unable to identify. She was placed in the care of an extended family member but a year later came to the children's home as this lady was unable to continue caring for her, partly because of the overtly aggressive behaviours she was demonstrating. She experienced severe Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, and to this day continues to have related nightmares and mourns the loss of her mother.

Selena was selected as an EAP participant because of the concerning amount of pent-up anger and aggression she displayed at school and at the home, as well as because of her long-standing PTSD symptoms. Justine had been receiving an increasing amount of feedback from the school regarding Selena's involvement in physical fights with other girls and her disrespectful manner towards her teachers.

4.5.6 Everdeen

Everdeen was removed from the care of her mother at a young age as she suffered from mental illness and was thus not able to care for her. However, each time a suitable placement was made at a residential care facility, her mother would make formal allegations that Everdeen was being abused, and thus she was moved from home to home. She has since been at this children's home for two years.

Justine selected Everdeen to participate in the EAP group as she felt she would benefit from having an emotional outlet, especially to help her deal with her mom's illness. At times she would have to bear witness to her mom acting like an infant, for example, which she found difficult to understand and cope with. Due to her quiet and reserved disposition, Everdeen tended to not deal with those things that would make her angry or upset until she was no longer able to cope. At this point she would *"erupt"* which often resulted in her breaking windows or running away from the home. It was hoped that the therapeutic process would help her to better understand and manage her strong emotions.

4.5.7 Troy

Troy was placed at The Home at the age of five, after having been abandoned on a rubbish heap by his mother. As he was born with a skin condition, albinism, he was rejected by his African family. The development of a healthy identity seems to have been impacted because of this. He had spent close to 13 years in the home before beginning EAP, yet had failed to form any significant relationships with any other children or care-workers. He related in an abrupt, harsh and disrespectful way to those who would make contact with him, avoided talking to others, and had difficulty making eye-contact in his communications. However, he did not seem to understand why people would become frustrated with his behaviours.

As he was nearing his 18th birthday, and thus his moving out of The Home, Justine selected Troy as an EAP participant in a desperate attempt to help him develop the skills he'd need to cope in the "*outside world*". She was uncertain as to how he would respond, as she felt it was very far removed from his hobbies of rapping and skating. However she took a chance nonetheless as, at the time of selection, he had recently been exposed to further loss and difficulty. The caregiver whom he stayed at over weekends and during holidays had passed away. Furthermore, his eyesight was beginning to deteriorate rapidly as a result of the albinism, and he found himself in the initial stages of having to accept his condition and the implications this may have on his future. Justine hoped that the EAP opportunity would assist him in gaining his independence, as well as help him to establish relationships with the other group members and herself so that he would not feel so "*lost and alone*" in the world.

4.5.8 Randy

Randy was placed in the children's home from a very young age after his mother was killed in a car accident. Although he was initially cared for by his grandmother, she later decided she was no longer able to do so because of her work and other obligations.

As a Xhosa child coming from a local township, his placement in a predominantly white Afrikaans home was a major adjustment for him. He expressed much anger towards his circumstances and seemed to feel that the world owed him for the difficulties he had experienced. Over the years, he battled to develop a clear identity, and he began to show clear symptoms of depression. In his younger years he had received the top sportsman award year after year, and he achieved an academic bursary. However, in recent times his marks had decreased significantly as well as his sporting performance. As a result, he lost his bursary. Justine hoped that by participating in the EAP therapy he would gain some of his *"sparkle"* back. She wanted to provide him with an opportunity to do something special and different, and to acquire new skills and knowledge, partly to compensate for his perceived failures at school and on the sports-field.

4.6 A THEMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE CASE FINDINGS

Various themes and categories emerged during an analysis of the obtained data for the study. A framework outlining the manner in which these are to be explored below is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

A framework of themes and categories explored in the case

Theme	Categories
4.7 The EAP process at The Centre, from multiple perspectives	- 4.7.1 The EAP process as described by Lisa - 4.7.2 The process as described by the participants - 4.7.3 The process as I observed it
4.8 The participants' experiences of EAP	- 4.8.1 The participants' thoughts and feelings regarding EAP - 4.8.2 Perspectives regarding the horses - 4.8.3 Interactions with the therapeutic team - 4.8.4 Experiences of participating in EAP as a group - 4.8.5 Experiences of learning - 4.8.6 The benefits of EAP (as experienced and voiced by the participants)
4.9 Current individual stories of the participants	- 4.9.1 Arno - 4.9.2 MJ - 4.9.3 Jamie - 4.9.4 Troy - 4.9.5 Willow - 4.9.6 Selena - 4.9.7 Everdeen - 4.9.8 Randy

4.7 THE EAP PROCESS AT THE CENTRE, FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Each of the participants involved shared their understanding of the EAP process as implemented at The Centre. Their descriptions are presented below.

4.7.1 The EAP process as described by Lisa

According to Lisa, the general aim of the EAP program was to establish bonds of trust with the group members through non-invasive activities and in a non-threatening environment. Initial sessions focused specifically on overcoming their fear of the horses. The participants spent time in the stables together with the therapist, observing the horses' body language, learning how to approach and connect with them, and grooming them. The principles for effective horse-human relationships - assertiveness, respect and trust - were modelled and the individuals were encouraged to apply them in their interactions. The therapeutic team were able to support the adolescents as they became familiar with the horses, and through this they also became more comfortable allowing the therapist into their space, freeing the way for a therapeutic relationship to develop.

The next phase of the therapeutic process involved encouraging the participants to develop new insights and perspectives regarding various aspects of their lives, using the horses as metaphors. As an example: often the fight/flight instinct of the horse was referred to as a comparison to the adolescent's response to the system in which they are placed (in residential care). Several of the group members were referred to EAP because they were fighting the system. A join-up technique (in which the horse chooses to submit to the therapist as their leader, without force) was used to illustrate to the participants the power of submitting - although they may want their freedom, and not like what is happening to them, they are encouraged to begin to come to a point where they allow other people in to their lives who have their best interests at heart. The EAP sessions also allowed the participants to be in the moment and to step away from their pasts. It provided a soft space for them in which they could breathe and vent, and just be.

4.7.2 The process as described by the participants

When describing their EAP process, the participants mentioned a host of activities completed at the stables. On arrival, they would greet Lisa and the volunteers, and have a conversation in the *"meeting room"*. During this time, Lisa checked in with how they have been and then explained the plan for the session. She also sometimes used this time as a teaching opportunity, and the participants recall learning about the new horses, how to respond "*if your horse doesn't want to listen"*, and "*ways you can treat the horse"*. Following this, the group would either, if it was raining, *"stand inside the stables and groom [their] horses"* or, they would "*walk through the forest"*, riding the horses or "*walking with other people on the*

horses". Other reported activities included: feeding the horses; bonding with them; making them "*look great*"; massaging them or bringing them grass, apples or water; speaking to each other and getting to know each other better; doing work around the stables; and, taking care of the tack (saddles and bridles).

4.7.3 The process as I observed it

Each of the sessions began with warm greetings as the participants got off the bus. We would gather to discuss any news or updates from the week, and then chat about the proceedings for the day. The initial sessions centred around spending time with the horses in their environment (the stables and paddocks). The participants then learnt how to groom and tack up their horses in preparation for riding. They would be partnered up, each having a turn to lead each other through the various riding trails. Over time, they developed their riding skills so that they did not need to be led. On other occasions, they would not ride but rather take their horses out to graze. Whether riding or working on the ground with the horses, this time allowed for me to interact with the group members, and I would often find myself deep in conversation about school, work, social situations, or other aspects of life with them.

Other ground-based activities included a join-up demonstration, learning about the horses and the care of these animals, activities around the yard, and participating in different challenges (sometimes intentional e.g. completing various tasks with the horses, and sometimes self-initiated, e.g. jumping over the various fences). A rescued horse"s arrival at the yard allowed for the exploration of issues surrounding abandonment, neglect, trauma, trust and survival. Various other opportunities for self-exploration presented spontaneously throughout the process, and the therapist incorporated these into the sessions appropriately.

The time at the stables was brought to a close each week with a debriefing discussion. Often the adolescents were asked to provide feedback on different situations or experiences, or they were given something to think about for the following week. The group members chose to end each session by giving the therapeutic team hugs, before we waved them off in their bus as they headed back home.

4.8 THE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES OF EAP

The experiences of the primary participants during the EAP process are explored in more depth in the following section. Their initial thoughts and feelings surrounding EAP are presented, followed by their perspectives regarding the interactions with the horses, the other

group members and the therapeutic team at The Centre. Their experiences of learning and the perceived benefits of the EAP process are then discussed.

4.8.1 The Participants' Thoughts and Feelings regarding EAP

4.8.1.1 Their initial reactions

"I was actually surprised because I actually wanted a kind of therapy thing and when she said it's horse therapy I'm like yeah, a new challenge. So I was kind of excited I guess"

(Jamie)

"At first I was like… it's going to be boring... it was something not for me..." (Troy)

"I felt nervous because I was scared I like fell off a horse and like everyone was going to make fun of me... I wanted to tell her that I didn't want to come..." (Willow)

When Justine initially told the individuals that they would be participating in EAP, there were mixed feelings amongst the group members. Four participants reported feelings of curiosity and excitement as working with horses would be a new experience for them. Two of the girls admitted to being scared and needed encouragement to participate, whilst most of the boys expected it to be boring. Only one individual was keen from the onset of the process, as he had previously requested to obtain some form of therapeutic support.

4.8.1.2 Their experiences of being at the stables for the first time

"It [the horse-riding] was actually a great thing for me because I always wanted to be on a horse" (MJ)

"My first day, it was kind of emotional I guess… I had like an emotional breakdown there. I don't know why... I just started crying" (Jamie)

"The first day when I went there, I have carsick so I actually felt nausea… I was thinking about how am I going to ride on the horse, if we going to start riding it? Are we going to play? What if I fall off? Am I going to get injured? I was scared" (Willow)

"I was scared. I wanted to cry... I always thought the horses were scary... their faces, their backs is big... they are really scary when they look at you like that, and their ears go up… I was just too scared to groom the horse the first day..." (Selena)

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On arrival at the stables for the first time, the majority of the group became quite anxious. They mentioned the size of the horse to be overwhelming, and feared they would be bitten or kicked, or that they would fall off when learning to ride. There was much uncertainty within the group as they did not know what to expect. One participant mentioned that he felt at ease amongst the animals, whilst another enjoyed being in a new and different environment.

4.8.1.3 The thoughts and feelings of the participants after some time

"My friends [at school] will always ask me how it is like to be like being on the horse... I told them, dude, it's always the best thing to go on a horse. For me it was like you are the King..."
(MJ)

"When we there it's just like, I don't know, it just lightens us up. You just see everybody is glad and everybody is laughing" (Randy)

"I'm more open about the horses you know... I'm actually now excited... I'm comfortable with them now... after a while you get to know them and then it's not that scary anymore"
(Jamie)

"It's just going there, going away from the home, like going to a new environment, just clear your head... like an escape. Not an escape but just like a get-away... like a safe friendly environment, just being nice to each other... everyone is so calm" (Troy)

"When I go there I'm always, like, happy" (Arno)

After some time spent engaging in the EAP process, shifts in perspective seemed to occur amongst the participants. A common theme that emerged from the data was a sense of anticipation as the participants keenly awaited their end-of-week EAP sessions. They seemed to begin to enjoy participating in the activities and the majority described it as a calming experience to be out in the fresh air, in nature and with animals. One participant described it as a safe, friendly and calm environment where he could escape to each week. Another observed that everybody seemed to lighten up when at the stables.

Further changes in opinion were also noted. Two of the members mentioned that they were now fond of horses, when previously they did not like them. The majority of the group also began to feel more comfortable and confident around the horses, although several were still anxious at times, for example: when their horse went too fast, whilst working with new or unfamiliar horses or a horse which was in a bad mood, and when the baboons were present in

the forest. One participant admitted to becoming more open to the process, after a period of wanting to terminate the therapy. He was finding his horse to be challenging and felt ready to give up. However, for him, pushing through this difficult time seemed to make the experience more meaningful and he was able to begin to identify valuable changes in himself which he attributed to the EAP process. Another individual enthusiastically recommends it to others who are going through difficult times.

When asked about which was their favourite part of the process, the near-unanimous answer was riding the horses. Several also mentioned that they enjoyed the opportunity to bond with their horses, and one noted that her best part involved spending time with her horse and doing his hair.

A few participants were able to provide a response regarding their least enjoyable experiences. These included: when their horses urinated as they found the smell to be unpleasant; not being able to ride on rainy days; having to lift up the horse's legs to clean out their hooves, and when their horse was in a bad mood. Four participants said there was nothing that they wished had been done differently, whilst the others would have liked to have been able to ride further into the forest and spend longer at the stables. There was also consensus amongst the group that they would have preferred for the sessions to be on an alternative day to Friday afternoons. Several of them are able to visit their family on the weekend, and this delayed their departure from the home. For one participant, she felt that it left her with less time to complete the large amount of homework she usually receives over the weekend.

4.8.2 Perspectives regarding the Horses

"He trusts me, and I trust him too. He is kind... he listens very quickly..." (MJ)

"He's calm when I'm around him and I'm calm when he's around me" (Randy)

"I'm more, more myself around the horses" (Jamie)

"Jet, she's very friendly. She's soft... She is approachable... she's just easy to work with. She's very, if I could say understanding.... She kind of knows how you feel, one feels, I guess"
(Jamie)

"When I talk to Diva and when I groom her, she understands me... When I brush her and then she tickles, and she like just turns at me and looks at me... that's my sign of knowing that she understands" (Willow)

"It feels great in a way because now you also know that there's something you have to care about and it also cares about you" (Randy)

"He's a special horse to me now. I would like to work with horses one day because of Jack. He has taught me a lot of stuff" (Selena)

Interacting with the horses allowed for the participants to experience a variety of different feelings, usually obtained through inter-personal relationships. Several members perceived friendliness towards them from the horse, and described the relationships of mutual trust that they felt had been established. The majority of participants seemed to take pride in getting to know their horses and they enjoyed explaining to me their unique and sometimes quirky mannerisms that they had discovered. The horses were perceived to be kind, loving, caring, approachable and understanding or empathetic. Two individuals emphasised that they felt their horses listened to them – an experience which they considered to be meaningful. Nearly all the group members mentioned a special bond, connection or sense of closeness that they felt with their horses, with the exception of one member who did not experience this as she was partnered with new horses every few sessions. There was also consensus within the group that being at the stables and spending time with their horses was relaxing and it seemed to have a calming effect on them.

4.8.3 Interactions with the Therapeutic Team

Each week, the participants interacted with the therapist, the volunteers, and the other group members during their time at the stables. Their experiences of these interactions are presented in this section.

4.8.3.1 The Therapist

"Well, in the beginning it wasn't, it wasn't that great. But now, but now it's like a great relationship actually... I didn't know her but now I've gotten to know her and she's actually a great person... and she's always happy so that I also like... she brings in the joy" (Randy)

"Well, at the beginning I was kind of sketchy about her. Well, not sketchy, but I don't know. Like I said, I'm not one to open up and speak about my feelings... But, after a while, I think I

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just got to know her and she's actually a really loveable person and she, she cares a lot about how the other person feels and she's taught me a lot of things, you know. She's still busy teaching me a lot of things about life" (Jamie)

"I find her friendly and I feel like I can trust her. She is an honest person with good intentions and she teaches us a lot of lessons, like life lessons, one can say, life-skills actually" (Troy)

"The first time I thought Tannie Lisa is scary the way she like talked and, like shouting a little... I tried to trust her and I knew she was a good person... now she acts more nicer. I don't know... now I trust her a lot" (Selena)

"She's approachable. You can like go and talk to her. You don't have to be shy and stuff like that" (Arno)

It became clear during the individual interviews that the group members initially harboured a sense of mistrust towards Lisa. They were not only reluctant of the therapeutic process, but also of her, as the therapist, viewing her as "*sketchy", "scary"* and *"strict"*. However, after some time they recount opening up to her and they described their established relationship as one characterised by trust, honesty, caring and joy. They all agreed that they found her approachable and they appreciated that she listened to them, encouraged them not to be scared, and pointed out things that they did well when relating to the horses. At times, according to one participant, she could be strict and stressed out, especially when there were safety-related concerns. Several participants felt that she helped them to acquire valuable life-skills.

4.8.3.2 The Volunteers

"It was good... because you people were there every time when we needed you especially me at the first day there. I didn't even know how to put the saddle on the horse... so you people were there to help us. So it was actually great." (MJ)

"It was nice, you know, you were there to encourage us, help us not to be afraid, and teach us that riding horses is awesome... You guys were very helpful, and you, when you always had a conversation with us while we were on the horses" (Jamie)

"The volunteers helped us, like, for instance when I was meant to get on Buzz, you stood there and she didn't move away from me. You waited and then asked me, okay, do I feel okay

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now to go on my own. And then I said no. You didn't say anything nasty. You just stood there and waited with me" (Willow)

"I was scared... I don't know what was scary about them, I was just scared of the volunteers... I was scared of other people. I don't like a lot of people around me and I really do change when there's a lot of people... [Then] they helped me kind of, to trust them"
(Selena)

Some of the participants were initially mistrustful of the volunteers, as they were with Lisa (and perhaps many new people entering their lives). However, they seemed to realise in the initial sessions that their role was to assist them, and their perspectives soon changed. They felt comforted that they were there when they needed help or reassurance, especially when Lisa was busy with somebody else. The participants also made use of the volunteers when they were unsure and through them they were able to acquire additional knowledge and skills. They enjoyed the companionship and relationships formed during their time at the stables, and found the volunteers to be encouraging, supportive, patient and non-judgemental, especially when they felt scared. The participants described their interactions with the volunteers as "*good", "fun", "nice*" and "*enjoyable*".

4.8.4 Experiences of Participating in EAP as a Group

"I think it was excellent actually... Because, while you're working with the horse you also get to know someone better... that you actually like didn't really notice... Ja, now I got to know them better" (Randy)

"The eight of us has got to know each other better I guess" (Jamie)

"You have to support each other in the beginning when everyone is nervous... calming each other down. I encouraged them to go touch the horses" (Troy)

"I've supported Arno... he's always the one who's at the back and like saying nothing, always trying to isolate himself. And actually, this time I got him to ride with me in front... So we were like walking there and he's trying to like race me... I actually got him out of his shell... I encouraged Arno a lot, I guess" (Jamie)

"I think everyone supported each other and encouraged people to like, like when Willow was scared and then everybody would just tell her to calm down and just look at it from the other angle" (Randy)

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"[In the car] Willow and them all do what they do best. They just speak about how the horses were that day and what we did. It's a good atmosphere" (Troy)

There were mixed feelings regarding working together in a group during the EAP process. For those perhaps more introverted individuals, a preference was shown for spending time alone with their horses. Others mentioned that whilst they enjoyed the interactions, it was good to be able to get away by going into their horse's stables before they annoyed each other. One of the older participants found it "*weird*" to engage with the younger, more boisterous personalities whom he felt were "*trying to be in the spotlight*" at the stables. Several participants described the group-work as "*fun"* and agreed that it provided them with an opportunity to get to know each other better, especially those that they hadn't noticed or gotten to know before.

It seems that working in the group allowed for the members to experience receiving and giving support to others, and they each mentioned various ways in which this was done. According to the participants', they encouraged each other with phrases of support such as "*you can do this"* and *"good luck"* – especially when a peer felt scared or unsure. Several other supportive behaviours were acknowledged, such as helping each other with their horses and walking next to a mounted partner so that they felt safer. These were reciprocated within the group, allowing the members to experience the positive implications of helping others. For example, it was mentioned that working together in a team allowed them to complete certain tasks quicker so that they could spend more leisure time with the horses.

Some of the participants admitted that they did not readily offer support to the others as this was not something they were familiar with doing. According to one, she "*just [doesn't] like helping other people"*. Another member could not think of a time when he assisted somebody else. He also only felt comfortable asking one particular person in the group for assistance. One member made a special effort to bring a peer out of his shell and to ensure he did not remain isolated from the group. Another began to support a friend away from the stable context by helping him with his schoolwork.

A lack of support was identified when a member fell off his horse and was laughed at by the group. However, it was then pointed out to the audience that they too could come off their horses and they were quickly able to recognise the embarrassment this would cause them. In the same vein, a participant decided to stop laughing at other people, something she used to do often, because "*what if the same thing happened to me… then it won't feel so funny*

anymore". Another participant commented that working in a group was "*cool*" because "*if you do something wrong, they can't make fun because they also a beginner like you*".

It became apparent that the group members were not particularly close before beginning EAP. Although several of them had one close peer in the group, the general interactions amongst the majority of members seemed to be limited to simple greetings. According to them, this could be ascribed to the fact that girls and boys are separated at the home, as well as the older and younger individuals.

Two of the participants felt that the general group relationships did not change following their involvement at The Centre. Others noted significant shifts which they felt have occurred. These include a sense of being like family, and the formation of a bond between them. One participant felt that they do not judge or tease each other as much anymore and they treat each other with more respect. The communication amongst them seemed to have improved and they found themselves chatting to each other more regularly, especially as they now had a topic of mutual interest. A pair of friends felt their friendship developed due to this shared hobby, and they no longer fight as much as they used to. One of the participants felt she had become more included in the group.

4.8.5 Experiences of Learning

The EAP process allowed for a broad range of learning experiences to occur, as recalled by the participants. These include lessons related to: horsemanship and horse-riding; developing a sense of responsibility; caring for others; and connecting and establishing healthy relationships with others.

4.8.5.1 Lessons related to Horsemanship and Horse-Riding

"Now I'm just like used to it. So, I can just be like "walk". And then he would like walk"
(Randy)

"My first day, I was really scared... it's a big beast you know... It was kind of new to me, so I was like "whoa man, you're kind of huge!"... I'm comfortable with them now... after a while you get to know them and then it's not that scary anymore" (Jamie)

"Now I know how to actually ride a horse, how to be with a horse, how to groom a horse, how to clean its tail, how to clean everything, you know! I know how, I know a lot more now than what I did" (Jamie)

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Arriving at The Centre on the very first day, all eight of the adolescents felt they knew "*nothing, nothing, nothing*!" about horses. For some it was their first time seeing a horse "*up close*" or "*in real life*". With the exception of one of them, it would be their first time on the "*big beasts*". For all, it was an anxiety-provoking experience – one that was "*all new*" to them.

Following this initial experience, it soon came to feel "*comfortable*" as they gained more knowledge about horses and riding. Their fear of the animals subsided and they began to perceive them as being "*kind*" and "*nice*", and "*almost like us*". Working with them became easier as they learnt various "*tricks*", sounds and "*secret*" words to get their horses to walk or lift their hooves, for example. They also realised that horsemanship requires them to be careful and it is something that "*is not as easy as it looks*".

Amongst the participants, a long list of new knowledge and skills was recounted. This included learning how to: tack up their horses and put away their valuable saddles and bridles with care; walk with the horse "*always on the left*"; groom, feed and look after their equine partners; and of course, how to ride. Much to their amusement, they discovered their horses sensitive or "*tickle spots*" which made their bodies twitch and shake when touched. They also began to identify the various moods and personalities amongst the horses, and the similarities between horse and human. Through learning more about animal communication, they began to read the horses behaviours with greater ease – something that helped to reduce their anxiety significantly.

A major emphasis was placed on learning about appropriate behaviour around the yard, in relation to safety as well as respect for the animals. According to the participants, it was important for them to be quiet, calm and assertive when working with the horses.

Several participants expressed much pleasure in having gained this new knowledge which they perceived as being valuable to them. Two individuals mentioned that following these experiences, they may be able to have their own farm or animals one day, or work in related environments. Another member was glad to be able to share his wisdom with a female classmate who found it to be impressive. According to one, knowing more "*feels great, actually*".

4.8.5.2 Learning about Responsibility

"[Taking care of the horse] made me feel like a grown-up... It made me realise that out in the real world it's not that easy" (Jamie)

"I was never one to clean up someone else's mess so it actually learned me how to clean up. Well, look after someone else I guess" (Jamie)

"[Now] I like actually know how much responsibility you need to like look after horses... Like a horse isn't just a thing you can have and it does its own stuff" (Arno)

"I actually did feel like I had to be responsible... It feels great in a way because now you also know that there's something you have to care about and it also cares about you" (Randy)

"In a sense there's a lot of responsibility that comes with it because the horse obviously can't clean itself. So it was my responsibility to, well, to take care of it and nurture it and clean it and help it look good... it's kind of hard work!" (Jamie)

"It taught me how to be responsible for something that is also living, to look after it. Keeping your horse healthy and making sure he is clean and happy, it feels good" (Troy)

In the words of one of the participants, the EAP group members seemed to realise that "*horses isn't just a thing you can have and it does its own stuff*". They found themselves having to be responsible for another living animal, and they discovered right from the start that this was no easy feat. They all admitted that it was hard work having to clean, feed and exercise their horses, look after the expensive tack (equipment), and also help out with other chores around the stable yard. These included catching the chickens and cats and putting them in the barn at the end of the day, helping unload the hay-bale deliveries, and spending some time aiding in the construction of a walkway for the horses through the winter mud. It was acknowledged that horsemanship is "*not actually an easy job*".

Despite the sometimes tiresome work, the participants appear to have enjoyed experiencing a sense of responsibility. According to them, it "*feels good*" and it is *"nice as the horse also cares for you"*. One of the girls compared her role to that of a parent, and although she found this "*nice*", she was glad it was not full time as *"it would get very tiring"*. Another participant mentioned it to have been a rewarding experience as he felt he made his horse happy by the care he provided him with.

Through this opportunity, they mentioned that they learnt to be more responsible for the animals but also, according to some, for themselves as well as their possessions. Furthermore, for most of them this was their first time caring for something else, and this, they felt, allowed them to develop skills which would enable them to continue looking after other living things.

4.8.5.3 Learning about Caring for Others

"It feels great in a way because now you also know that there's something you have to care about and it also cares about you" (Randy)

"To take care of them is like to take care of other people. You can also take care of animals by the same way. By treating them well, giving them love" (Selena)

Not only did the participants feel a sense of responsibility for their horses, but they also mentioned developing a deeply caring attitude towards them. They demonstrated such care through taking their horses apples, fetching them grass or topping up their water buckets, giving them massages or extended grooms to make them "*shine*", and by taking them for "*special walks*". This, they felt, was necessary so that "*they can feel like, special*", because "*you can't always just want to ride and not do something back for the horses*". Their concern displayed at the stables appears to have become part of their general attitudes towards living beings as they claimed to have learnt more about "*how to take care of nature*" and also to have become more protective over their friends, people around them, and even other animals. For example, a participant shared an incident in which he fetched a friend's dog which he saw roaming within gangster territory and took him home to where he would be safe. Another feels he came to realise the importance of treating animals with love, rather than violence – something that he used to do previously.

4.8.5.4 Lessons learnt about Relationships and Connecting

"I learned that horses are almost the same as humans... like, they have moods just like we do and they have different personalities" (Everdeen)

Three important principles were emphasised to the group members during their time at the stables, namely respect, assertiveness and trust. These were described to them as being essential skills to apply when working and developing relationships with the horses. Later, the participants were encouraged to view these guiding principles as important life-skills too.

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According to one participant, "*you must trust your horse in order for that horse to trust you*". A comment of one of the girls was that "y*ou need to do stuff that horses like, and not do stuff that other people don't like by horses*". She had come to understand that she needed to respect the space, moods and personalities of not only the horses, but those around her too. The participants began to realise that "*if you work with animals you can work in the same way with human beings*" and that through interacting with horses, they can "*learn more about humans*" as well.

4.8.6 The Benefits of EAP (as experienced and voiced by the participants)

"It makes you feel better... well, just more confident… after you talk to the horses you just like, feel like talking to everyone then" (Randy)

"It learned me how to be a leader I guess... How to, well, if you work with animals you can work in the same way with human beings I guess" (Jamie)

"I learned be yourself… there is no point in being someone that you are not in front of a horse because it's pointless... the horse isn't going to say something… you can be yourself, you don't need to act." (Troy)

"Just being around animals, it's like, I don't know. It just brings more joy in me…I used to be a very grumpy person… I just wouldn't smile at anyone and not greet the people. I'll just walk past them and be angry the whole time. But when I started like going there, I just like saw that life is just like, it's nice." (Randy)

"The horses like calm you, like especially on a Friday. Then it calms you for the weekend and then through the week you like stress and on the Friday it calms you again" (Arno)

The participants were able to share many aspects of their experience that they perceived as being beneficial to them. These include factors concerning their emotional well-being as well as areas in which they felt they were able to develop.

Several of the group members mentioned an increased sense of self-confidence attained through the EAP process. One compared the experience of being on a horse to that of feeling "*like a King*". The majority of the participants felt that their participation gave them something which was unique to them in comparison to their friends. They were able to engage in a "*risky*" and challenging activity and learn skills "*of their own*", something which they related to me with pride. For one participant, her involvement led to her being included

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in "*horse-related*" conversations with other riders in her class. She was able to share something of mutual interest and felt she gained respect from others when they heard that she had begun horse-riding.

The Centre was described by one of the adolescents as being a place where he could clear his head and, in a sense, escape. He enjoyed being in nature, away from typical daily stresses and distractions. Three of the participants noted the calming effect that being at the stables seemed to have for them. One felt that he had also become more calm in other situations, such as during school athletics races. Feelings of joy, being lightened up and cheered up, happiness and relaxation are described by the group, and one member mentions that, through this, he developed a more positive attitude to life. Feelings of comfort and warmth were also indicated resulting from the interactions with the "*soft and fluffy*" horses.

A theme that was noted by several of the participants related to being provided with an opportunity to get to know themselves or "*another side*" of themselves better. For one he felt it allowed him to "*get in touch emotionally*" whilst another believed he could explore being himself in this context due to the non-judgemental nature of the horses. Some became aware that they were beginning to develop in various ways, including the development of leadership skills and a sense of responsibility. They also were able to gain an awareness of their own behaviours through their interactions with the horses, and began to self-regulate themselves as was most appropriate. Those louder or more aggressive individuals, for example, needed to carefully monitor these behaviours in order to work most effectively with their horses. They were made aware of this from the outset and over time, several felt they became more aware of the implications of their behaviours and could monitor and regulate them more appropriately.

The benefits of the EAP process seem to have extended into the social realm for several of the participants. For one, he felt that as he became happier, he became less threatening to others. He began to gain the confidence to engage in conversations with his peers more easily and he made some new friends. Another participant explains how he learnt to relate better to human beings through working with animals. He felt he was able to apply the principles of assertiveness, trust and respect emphasised at the stables to his relationships with others. Trust appeared to be a common theme in the stories of the individuals, and they spoke openly about the trusting relationships they established with their horses. It seems they viewed their

equine partners as companions and confidantes – another being to whom they could talk to and feel "*listened to*".

There was consensus amongst several of the members that the atmosphere at the stables and the home, as well as the attitudes of the participants improved. They mentioned a lighter, more joyful, friendly and happy mood and a willingness to engage with one-another rather than to stay in their "*own worlds*" – something which was not often seen previously. They felt they learned to connect and bond with other people and became more confident to do so.

"Everybody has just been lightened up... everyone will just speak to everyone and be joyful. You just see everyone smiling, and like almost no-one used to smile... Everyone was just like in their own worlds but now it's like everyone has joined into one place... now everyone is very close to each other, like we would share with someone that you never shared with... and that you never actually really noticed" (Randy)

4.9 CURRENT INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The following section includes Justine's thoughts regarding each of the participants' current functioning and psychological well-being, together with my personal reflections written at the end of the data collection process.

4.9.1 Arno

"At school I used to get angry and like quickly, like angry or aggressive or whatever you call it. But now, I'm actually chilled… I'm like more calm and stuff" (Arno)

My first impressions of Arno, as recorded in my journal, were of him being quiet, timid and anxious around people. He appeared to have little self-esteem and would make minimal contact with us during the initial sessions. However, he appeared to gain much confidence through the program. He began to engage with the therapeutic team and I recall having some lengthy conversations with him whilst riding.

Justine views the shift in his posture and body image as one of the most evident changes in Arno. His core muscles developed in such a way that he began to stand taller and prouder, and he lost a healthy amount of weight. She also noted that Arno started to develop positive attachments within The Home and he became openly affectionate. No recent incidents of hurting himself or others have occurred. At a social and emotional level, the therapy appears

to have been very beneficial to him and much improvement in his attitude and behaviours was noted.

4.9.2 MJ

"Proud of myself? I am proud of myself!" (MJ)

At first, I found it challenging to chat to MJ. He avoided interactions and did not communicate freely. I sensed he had a very low self-esteem. Over time he began to engage spontaneously and although he remained reserved, he seemed to feel more comfortable in the presence of others. He struck me as a responsible, mature, cooperative and quietly keen gentleman – attributes that were slowly exposed during the EAP process.

According to Justine, MJ experienced the therapy process as beneficial in that it assisted him in finding his voice. He began to approach the child care workers at the home to speak about his needs and difficulties. He also began to show affection towards the staff and his peers, and became a part of the group rather than his previous patterns of removing himself from his peers.

4.9.3 Jamie

"I'm more loveable I guess... more affectionate... well, I was always a guy that like suppressed his emotions... that was just not how I roll. But now I'm like beginning to talk more about it and you know, let the me out, you know, the real me, so it's changed me in a good way to actually kind of find myself... be myself... I'm more round now you know, I'm not a square any more... I'm easy to work with. I'm not that difficult, you know. I go where the wind goes" (Jamie)

Jamie's response to the EAP process was perceived as very positive by both Justine and I. During one of the very first sessions, a join-up was demonstrated to the group. This triggered an emotional response for Jamie as he witnessed the horse coming to accept and trust the therapist. Justine believes that this was a breakthrough for him as he realised that he did not have that connection with anyone in his life as he had closed himself off to it. EAP seemed to open the space in which strong relationships could be established, with Justine, Lisa as well as the group members. Jamie began to open himself up and let other people into his world. He was able to develop leadership skills, as the oldest member in the group. This I recall observing right from the first session as he led the group in making contact with the horses.

His school marks also improved significantly, which Justine says she cannot attribute to any other interventions.

Since the beginning of 2013, Jamie has been enrolled in an internship program at a well-known restaurant, training to become a chef. He is living independently and supporting himself using the money he earns through the restaurant. He often returns back to the children's home and has become a positive role-model to the other children. He enjoys motivating them to take responsibility for their lives and to work hard. His emotional well-being has also improved greatly as he has become more insightful and emotionally mature. He has established supportive relationships with Justine and Lisa, both of whom he contacts regularly. He also feels he no longer needs anti-depressant medication and has been coping well without it for several months. Within my reflective journal, I recall Jamie as being competent, mature and respectful, and I admired the open displays of kindness towards the other group members and the horses. I enjoyed his soft nature and quiet sense of humour.

4.9.4 Troy

"I just learned how to become patient because I am very impatient and working with horses taught me how to be patient... like when the horse does not want to listen to you or he is being grumpy or whatever, not to get, how can I say, how to get all hyped up, just to chill, relax... if you are calm with the horse then the horse will want to connect with you." (Troy)

Within my journal, I recount that Troy arrived at The Centre with a 'too-cool-for-school' attitude. He was friendly and charismatic from the start, but also sceptical and not at all enthusiastic about participating in the program. He took great interest in my social life and we bonded based on these initial conversations. Over time we began to talk more about his school-related concerns and plans for future studies. I observed how he became one of the keenest participants.

Although Justine initially had her doubts about selecting Troy for the EAP process, he seemed to grow significantly within just the first few sessions. He connected with his horse right from the start, establishing a close, affectionate and trusting relationship with another being – something he had not seemed to have done since a young child. He took pride in this relationship and adopted a caring, responsible and protective role over his horse. He began to open up at the stables and the home, spontaneously making social and physical contact with others, showing interest in their well-being, and taking on a cheerful and playful disposition

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in his interactions. He was seen joking with his peers for the first time, giving hugs to the group members at the stables, and showing affection to his horse. At the end-of-year event at the home, he opted to be the Master of Ceremonies as well as the DJ, and spent the evening engaging with the others rather than isolating himself as he had done for so many years before. Another meaningful shift was apparent in his school marks, which increased significantly throughout the course of the school year, resulting in him obtaining a very pleasing Matric Exemption. Prior to beginning EAP, he showed no interest in school and was failing most of his subjects. Justine cannot attribute these improvements to anything else, as no additional support was provided during that year except for the EAP. The staff at the home found him to be much more pleasant as he no longer barks requests or ignores them. He has become visibly more self-assured, confident, respectful, and open to trusting others. He has also begun to take an active role in planning for his future and is currently completing a sound production course before beginning an employment contract with a well-known company. He has developed a more solid identity, and has come to accept his emerging disability – evident by his self-initiated research into job possibilities and support for the visually impaired.

4.9.5 Willow

"I listen to instructions now... Before, I was, like, just ignoring Tannie Lisa, and doing my own thing... I didn't feel like it..." (Willow)

Willow benefitted from the EAP process as she was able to learn to better recognise and interpret non-verbal patterns of communication, as well as begin to understand the effects of her own moods and behaviours on others. She initially struck me as someone with a heightened sense of anxiety as she was excessively nervous during the first few sessions. She constantly had to regulate her over-excited and anxious behaviours in order to calm down her horse which would become jittery as a result. She also had to learn to respect the personal boundaries of the horses she worked with and to tread more thoughtfully and considerately around other living beings. I observed how, with time, she began to trust the therapeutic team a little bit, and she became less lively and irritable. According to Justine, significant improvements were seen in her behaviour at The Home and a foster care placement was considered for her, although this did not materialise. She is still attending weekly therapy sessions with the group as there are still further essential personal developments that need to occur for her.

4.9.6 Selena

"It means a lot for me because I am kind of a rude girl and now I learn how to respect people… I used to fight, swear. Like when I started the horse thing… [Now] they have no problems. They have no problems with me here now... They had a lot, like punish me the whole time and I thought therapy is not good enough for me. Then, I started and I started getting better and better... I thought I would never change" (Selena)

Selena arrived at the stables a force of energy and nerves. She recognised me as somebody who could assist her, and thus attached herself to me almost immediately. During the first few sessions she was demanding of my attention, despite the needs of the other members, and she required much reassurance. A significant shift was noted, however, when she participated in the join-up activity during one session. The horse decided to follow her around the arena, establishing her as his leader. This was a powerful moment for us all, and it seemed to empower Selena and give her the confidence boost she desperately needed. Soon she became one of the more active members in the group, taking part in all the activities in a determined and mature manner. She appeared to be more contained and less needy. She was clearly very proud of all she learnt and achieved, and she began to assert her independence during sessions. I also observed how she seemed to be better accepted by the other two girls, and fitted in nicely with the group as a whole. Her personal growth appeared to be clearly visible over the months during which I joined the group in the EAP process.

Justine recalled how Selena seemed to form an attachment with her horse from the first day. She took great pleasure in the unconditional love she received in this relationship. She responded responsibly to meet the challenging demands from her particularly difficult horse, and seemed to mature throughout the process. Justine also noted, as I did, how her behaviour towards the significant others in her life improved greatly. Her extended family members commented on how she became more respectful and interacted better as part of the family during her weekend and holiday visits. Although she does still seem to hold much anger, the level of this has declined significantly and she tends to manage it in a less physical and aggressive manner. There have been no incidents of physical aggression in the past months. Justine agrees that she has become more accepted by the group members, and has been able to bond and form better relationships with the others at the home. However, she notes that she still needs much support in order to assist her in overcoming the PTSD symptoms that she continues to experience.

4.9.7 Everdeen

"Before I used to like just say things to people without really thinking. Now I think before I talk and I don't hurt people's feelings as much" (Everdeen)

My perceptions of Everdeen were recorded in my journal as follows: *"smart, big mind, modest, contained, mature girl, leadership potential, gentle, calm, polite, respectful, engaged, and quietly enthusiastic"*. It was a surprise for me to hear about her behaviour outbursts when discussing her history. Justine noted, however, that since beginning EAP therapy, Everdeen's emotional outbursts have decreased in number as well as in severity. There have been no incidents of her breaking glass or running away in recent months, and she now seems better able to speak out and give voice to her feelings. She no longer chooses to isolate herself as frequently in her reading, and has developed stronger relationships with the others in the group as well as the care-workers at the home. I also became aware that she opened up to me a little bit more each week, and was less reserved in the group.

4.8.8 Randy

"Randy, he used to get angry a lot at little things... and now he doesn't get angry as much also... like if he used to call you and you didn't hear him and then he used to get angry at you. But now, if he calls you and you didn't hear him, he's just like, ag man, I'll talk to her later, or stuff like that... I think it's from the horse-riding" (Everdeen)

"I've stopped fighting... I just like used to walk up to someone and then when they pushed me I would beat them up... and I don't know why [I'd be so aggressive]... But now… I would just like use that same tone [of assertiveness] and then they'll just like say sorry and walk"

(Randy)

On the first day at The Centre, as documented in my journal, Randy refused to get out of the bus. When he eventually decided to join the group, he sat on the fence and chose not to speak to anybody. Within two sessions, a significant change in attitude was observed. Randy connected with one of the horses, and became an active and enthusiastic participant. Although he remained one of the quieter group members, no further displays of avoidance, resistance or withdrawn behaviour was observed.

Justine noted that Randy seemed to mature during the EAP process, adopting a more responsible and less entitled attitude to his life. Whilst previously he had expected things to

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be done for him, he developed his independence and, according to Justine, began thinking for himself. She feels some of his sparkle returned, and there were clear improvements in his marks and sports performances. Furthermore, he stopped wetting his bed – something that he had begun to do on regular occasions prior to beginning EAP. He opened up socially and became closer to certain members of the home, particularly those his age. He seemed to become more self-confident and opened up to affection and praise. It was clear to the care-workers at the home that he became a much happier and friendlier individual.

4.10 SUMMARY

The findings of the research were presented as a case study within this chapter. These will be explored further and in conjunction with the relevant literature in Chapter Five. The research questions can thus also be addressed. The concluding chapter will also explore the possible implications of this research, some of its strengths and limitation, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, STRENGTHS AND
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of the research study was to explore EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care, particularly in terms of fostering resilience in order to assist them in overcoming adversity. A qualitative study founded within the interpretive paradigm was used to gain insight into the research questions. The Circle of Courage has been considered as a theoretical framework linking EAP and the process of fostering resilience.

The findings obtained through semi-structured interviews, the researcher's reflective journal, and a focus group discussion were integrated and presented as a case study in the previous chapter. This chapter offers an exploration of these findings in light of the literature regarding the population group, EAP, resilience and the Circle of Courage. Furthermore, the research questions outlined for this study are addressed. Final reflections regarding the implications of this study, its strengths and limitations, and recommendations for further research, are also included in this chapter.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.2.1 Aim of the Discussion

The following discussion aims to review the findings presented in Chapter 4 in light of the literature, theoretical framework and research questions. Congruencies are identified and unique findings presented. Furthermore, the apparent EAP-Circle of Courage link is highlighted and examples from this study are provided to illustrate how the principles of this Native American philosophy are implicit within a modern-day EAP process. Resilience is also explored in relation to EAP and the Circle of Courage.

5.2.2 The Participants

The population group for this study consisted of adolescents in residential care. Eight participants were selected, each emerging from different contextual backgrounds. The reasons for each of their removals from their families are consistent with those provided in the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 (2010), namely: abandonment, parental mental

illness, abuse by a family member, emotional neglect, living on the street and poor social-economic circumstances, parental substance abuse, and the loss of their primary care-giver. The primary participants were removed from neglectful, abusive or chaotic homes, in which they experienced significant adversities (Berger, Bruch, Johnson, James & Rubin, 2009; Fraser, n.d.; Osborn & Delfabbro, 2006).

The participant's demonstrated a variety of behaviours within The Home, many of which may be attributed to their removal from their families or homes, as well as their previous circumstances and experiences. According to Doyle (2007), the decision to remove an individual from their home is likely to have negative implications, despite ensuring the protection of the child. Several of the adolescents were reported to experience difficulties forming secure attachment relationships, following the disruption of that with their primary caregivers (Zuravin & DePanfilis, 1997). Other emotional manifestations apparent amongst the participants included: strong feelings of resentment and anger towards their families and current circumstances; poor identity and self-esteem development; difficulty connecting with others, isolation, and the internalisation of feelings; difficulty understanding relationships and social situations, and poor social skills; negative peer influences; feelings of rejection and abandonment; a poor sense of belonging; depression and self-mutilation; rebelliousness; poor school performance; and, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and various related symptoms. None of the group members, or their peers at The Home, had participated in criminal activities (to our knowledge) or dropped out of school, although involvement in substance use and perhaps abuse was hinted at (Doyle, 2007).

5.2.3 The Participants' experiences of EAP

The process occurring at The Centre was often referred to as an animal-assisted intervention, based on the therapist's incorporation of both horses and dogs into her practice. However, the participants in this study worked solely with the horses prior to and during the research period. Furthermore the therapy was consistent with the definitions of EAP within the literature. The adolescents participated in a goal-directed, experiential psychotherapeutic intervention in which horses were included as part of the therapeutic team, enabling them to open up and resolve emotional and behavioural difficulties (Dimitrijevic, 2009; Ewing et al., 2007; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002).

The adolescents reported experiencing much fear during their first interactions with the horses. However, after a short while, they began to feel more comfortable in their presence and started to form special bonds with their equine partners. They also expressed feelings of pride as they became more competent in working with the horses. According to Frewin and Gardiner (2005), participants can be expected to initially be intimidated by the horse's size. However, once this fear is overcome, with the help of the therapeutic team, this can be perceived as an empowering experience for the individual. Furthermore, the positive response of a powerful animal to commands given by vulnerable participants can serve to validate their power and control – something that was experienced and expressed by several of the group members in this study (Trotter et al., 2008). The positive self-esteem development evident in the adolescents during the process, as described in the findings, may be in part related to these equine interactions. The members were able to experience positive feelings of power and opportunities to influence another living being (Dingman, 2008; Rothe et al., 2004).

The participants reported feeling accepted by the horses and found the stables to be a place where they could truly be themselves, without having to act or put on a facade. The unconditional positive regard and non-judgemental nature communicated by the horses is referred to in Trotter et al. (2008) and Vidrine et al. (2002). A lack of judgement is likely to contribute to the creation of a safe environment in which emotional issues can surface and be resolved (Christian, 2005; Dingman, 2008). The literature suggests this characteristic of EAP may result in individual's feeling more comfortable to be verbally expressive and emotionally open during the therapy sessions. This corresponds with the research findings in which it was apparent that the horses helped the participants to get in touch emotionally

Participants described the horses as kind, loving, caring, approachable and empathetic – characteristics of an authentic relationship allowing for feelings of trust to be established (Dingman, 2008). This, according to Cumella and Simpson (n.d.), is a particularly valuable feature of EAP for individuals whose ability to trust has been violated, as in the case of this study. Both the findings and the literature suggest that interactions with the horses which are characterised by trust, respect and unconditional positive regard, pave the way for other relationships to occur. Within the horse-human relationship, caring is taught and communicated, and empathy developed (Rothe et al., 2004; Vidrine et al., 2002). The development of a positive relationship and the restoration of trust within a supportive and safe environment can be seen as the first safe step towards participants becoming more comfortable with humans too (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Dingman, 2008).

It is widely documented within the literature that therapeutic interactions with horses can result in an increased awareness of one's own non-verbal communications (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002). It was evident from the findings that the participants were encouraged to gain an awareness of their own behaviours and how the horses responded to these. This was not only particularly relevant for those more boisterous, loud and aggressive individuals, but also for those members who displayed much anxiety or who were very timid. They quickly learnt that calm and controlled behaviours would maximise the cooperation of their horses. If they became too overtly nervous and jumpy, their horses would act up. Similarly, timid or aggressive approaches were met with stubbornness or a lack of cooperation. The principles of assertiveness, trust and respect were reinforced during sessions and guided their interactions at the stables. These principles are echoed within the EAP literature (Cumella & Simpson, n.d.; Klontz et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002).

EAP can be associated with improved social relationships and social acceptance, and reduced feelings of loneliness or isolation (Cumella & Simson, n.d.; Dingman, 2008; Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004; Strom & Wilson, 2009; Vidrine et al., 2002). Through gaining an understanding of the horse's non-verbal cues as well as their own communication, important skills can be developed which are considered useful in human relationships (Rothe et al., 2004). According to Vidrine et al. (2002), horses are able to teach humans to send congruent messages, both verbally and through body-language. Consistent with the above, improved self-regulation and social behaviours were evident within the findings. One participant mentioned he began to approach others in a less aggressive and less threatening manner. Improved sensitivity towards, interest in and concern for others was also noted amongst the group members. Empathy development is highlighted within Ewing et al. (2007), together with increased feelings of social acceptance and an improved ability for participants to make friends and interact with other people. The group members reported that the EAP experience provided them with an opportunity to get to know each other better. They were able to help and support one another and over time came to treat each other with more respect. Communication within the group was increased, and this was attributed to sharing something of mutual interest. It is evident within the findings that the group members began to demonstrate more socially appropriate behaviours not only at the stables but at The Home and their various schools too.

A theme that emerged continuously throughout the findings was the calm atmosphere at The Centre. The participants described the interactions with the horses as well as being in nature as relaxing. They found the stables to be a place where they could escape and clear their heads, far removed from their daily lives and troubles. These findings are congruent with EAP literature in which the calming effects of interacting with animals are documented (Dimitrijevic, 2009). During EAP sessions, clients are removed from their surroundings and placed in an outdoor, natural setting, surrounded by beauty and fresh air (Christian, 2005; Dimitrijevic, 2009). A unique, safe therapeutic environment is thus created in which healing and optimal growth and development can occur (Christian, 2005; Trotter et al., 2008). This was referred to as a soft space by the therapist in this study.

Many of the benefits of the EAP process identified within the findings are congruent with those described within the literature. According to Dingman (2008), the benefits of therapeutic horse-human relationships are far-ranging, and have an impact on the whole person, including physical, psychological, psychosocial, spiritual and cognitive aspects. Physical benefits of horse-riding include improved muscle tone and posture, as observed with at least one participant (Dingman, 2008). An enhanced sense of responsibility and development of leadership skills was also evident within the group (Ewing et al., 2007; Trotter et al., 2008; Vidrine et al., 2002). Participants were encouraged to take responsibility for their horse and were required to participate in their care as well as other stable-yard chores (Ewing et al., 2007; Rothe et al., 2004). Other benefits emerging from the findings included: feelings of joy, cheerfulness and a happier disposition; the development of a more positive attitude to life; getting to know another side of themselves; the demonstration of affection towards animals as well as humans with greater ease; positive behaviour changes; positive personal attributes being exposed and enhanced; improved academic performance; positive identity development; increased maturity; and, participants becoming less needy and more independent.

Whilst analysing the data, it became increasingly evident that the research findings resembled the EAP literature greatly, as discussed above. The participants seemed to echo these texts somewhat verbatim at times. However, some unique findings also emerged.

Although the initial participant mistrust of the therapeutic team was briefly suggested in the literature, this emerged as being a significant part of the EAP process in my findings. The participants perceived the therapist as well as the volunteers as intimidating, strict and even

unfriendly at the start. However, after a short period of time these perceptions changed greatly. It is likely that these initial feelings are also experienced in other situations when the participants are expected to let unfamiliar people into their lives. This can be related to the adolescents' past experiences and negative interactions with other beings (Zuravin & DePanfilis, 1997). It appears that the initial EAP sessions not only allowed for the participants to become more comfortable with the horses, but also with the therapeutic team too.

The role of the volunteers in the EAP sessions appeared to be under-emphasised in the literature, in comparison to the research findings. The participants each mentioned that they appreciated the presence of the volunteers as the therapist was not always able to respond to them individually. They found it to be reassuring to be able to call on the additional team members when necessary and described them as encouraging and supportive. They also seemed to contribute to the group dynamic, allowing for companionship and interpersonal relationships to occur, as well as the modelling and development of appropriate communication and social skills.

There did not appear to be much literature related to the group approach within EAP, although this could be explored further in texts relating specifically to group therapy. Several benefits of working together emerged in my findings, contributing to the value of EAP as a whole. Participants were provided with opportunities to experience reciprocity through both giving and receiving support. It allowed for a sense of belonging to be fostered as well as for connections to be made amongst the group members.

One aspect that was explored in some depth within the literature but not within the research findings was that of the horse allowing for client transference and projection to occur. This difference can be related to the therapist's theoretical approach as well as the specific goals of the EAP process. Transference and projection are terms located within a psycho-dynamic psychological frame of reference, whilst alternative theoretical approaches appeared to be favoured at The Centre, namely person-centred and strengths-based approaches. The sessions with this particular group of individuals focused predominantly on developing skills and relationships that would allow for resilience to be fostered, rather than uncovering unconscious aspects and defences as would be the focus in a psycho-dynamic approach (Corey, 2001; Van Niekerk & Hay, 2009).

5.2.4 Promoting Resilience amongst Adolescents living in Residential Care through EAP and the Circle of Courage

EAP has been explored within the literature, the findings and the above discussion as a therapeutic approach that works towards improving the psychological well-being of the participants involved. During a comprehensive investigation of the approach, it became evident that the principles of the Circle of Courage philosophy are inherently addressed within the EAP process. The Circle of Courage model integrates the child and youth development philosophy of traditional Native American people with findings gained through professional practice working with vulnerable youth (Starr Institute for Training, 2012). The model resonates with resilience theory as, when the key growth needs of mastery, generosity, independence and belonging are met, positive growth can result – despite previous adversities or experiences in which these needs have been lacking (Brentdro & Larson, 2004; Coopersmith, 1967; Gilgun, 2002; Winter & Preston, 2006).

Multiple opportunities for the participants to experience the four pillars of the Circle of Courage were presented throughout the EAP process. Furthermore, the literature also makes reference to these opportunities. However, the connections to this Native American philosophy implicit in the literature and the findings have, as of yet, not been documented.

Mastery, according to Brendtro et al. (1990), involves being able to do something well and to feel pride in being able to do so. Participants reported a wide variety of EAP-related experiences in which they felt proud. They reported to be proud of their participation and the progress they made. They developed numerous horsemanship and horse-riding skills, and took great pleasure in being able to describe their horses in intimate detail. A sense of achievement could be obtained each time the horses responded to their non-verbal commands, or whenever a member of the therapeutic team pointed out something that they were doing well. Overcoming their initial fears of the horses as well as the feelings of mistrust towards the therapeutic team was also a mastery experience. As they progressed, they began to open up to people around them at The Centre, allowing for the development of important interpersonal and communication skills to occur. Through learning more about caring for others and about relationships and connecting, a sense of social mastery could be enhanced. The participants also became more aware of their own behaviours around the sensitive horses and began to practice greater self-control and responsibility – another element of Mastery as described by Gilgun (2002).

Generosity is defined by Brendtro et al. (1990) as being generous and unselfish. It involves giving to others and developing a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002; Marlowe et al., 2009). Clear acts of generosity were identified as the participants developed deeply caring attitudes towards their horses. They made great efforts to ensure their equine partners felt special, for example by bringing them apples, grass or water, grooming them until they shone, and giving them massages and tickles. They were careful to be gentle, quiet, kind and respectful towards the horses and also helped in their general care. Although the activities at The Centre promoted these behaviours, they were initiated spontaneously by the participants throughout each of the sessions too. Acts of generosity are said to lead to increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, as experienced by the participants (Brendtro et al., 1990). The group members mentioned that they enjoyed caring for the horses, and that it made them feel good. Acts of generosity towards human beings also became increasingly evident. The adolescents offered help and support to each other freely and demonstrated greater concern towards their peers, not only within the group but outside of the EAP context too. Significant changes were noted in several of the group members, as explored in the findings, as their interactions with others become characterised by greater respect and concern.

Belonging within Native culture extends beyond belonging to a certain family, but rather it entails being part of a supportive community (Brendtro et al., 1990). This is particularly significant in the context of residential care as the individuals experience feelings of being rejected or displaced from their families, as evident in the findings. Connections with all living things, including animals and nature, were encouraged at The Centre, in accordance with the Circle of Courage philosophy (Gilgun, 2002). The participants described the EAP site as a safe and friendly environment in which they felt happy and less isolated or withdrawn. The supportive community atmosphere was facilitated by the therapist, volunteers and the horses, all whom they described as trustworthy, caring, empathetic, approachable, and non-judgemental. A sense of belonging can be fostered through these experiences of love and support reported by the participants, and through positive relationships characterised by trust and intimacy (Brendtro et al., 1990; Gilgun, 2002). Sharing a common interest with their peers within the group as well as with other horse-riders, for example at school, is also likely to have contributed to feelings of belonging within an equine community. Furthermore, an increased sense of self confidence and improved social skills appeared to result in friendships

being established outside of The Centre context, further fostering this fundamental growth need.

Independence can be defined as the need to be in control of oneself and to be able to influence others (Brendtro et al., 1990). For adolescents living within a community of 40 other young individuals, as in the case of the participants of this study, opportunities for this need to be met are likely to be minimal. Within the context of EAP however, the adolescents were provided with a sense of independence through having to care for their horses and their equipment, being involved in stable-yard chores and activities, and directing their horses whilst riding or working with them. The concept of independence, according to Gilgun (2002), also includes taking into consideration the effects of one's own behaviours on others and modifying these appropriately. This was emphasised at The Centre as the adolescents were required to regulate their behaviours appropriate to the horses' needs. These behaviours were reinforced as their horse would respond positively when they were appropriately demonstrated. Through such experiences of ownership and responsibility the individuals could begin to realise that they are in charge of their attitudes and choices, further fostering feelings of independence (Marlowe et al., 2009). For some of them, independence was exerted when they made conscious decisions to participate and engage in the EAP process.

It is evident from the above that opportunities for mastery, belonging, generosity and independence were presented to the participants during their engagement at The Centre. The fostering of these growth needs implicit within the EAP process may have contributed to the positive development indicated in the findings of this study. With recognition of the EAP-Circle of Courage connection, further possibilities for the four pillars to be fostered within EAP sessions can be explored and implemented, adding to the already apparent benefits of the process.

5.2.5 Conclusion

The findings and the above discussion represent the experiences of eight adolescents living in residential care and the meaning it has had for them in their lives. This information was obtained through interviews with the primary participants, the social worker and the therapist, as well as from the reflective journal of the researcher. Interpretations of the integrated findings were verified through a focus group discussion with the group members and documented within this text. The principles of the Circle of Courage were implicitly played out during the EAP process, and these connections were identified in this research. These

findings were related to resilience theory in order to depict EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach which serves to foster resilience for vulnerable adolescents.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

During the data collection and analysis process, several possible recommendations emerged that could contribute to the EAP experience. These are based on aspects expressed by the various participants and identified within my own reflections on the findings.

It became apparent that the adolescent participants were not always involved in the stable-yard on-goings and opportunities for therapist-participant collaboration were not always utilised. Certain participants mentioned not being aware of information relevant to them, including why their horse had been sent to another yard and also regarding the specific program in which they were involved and what they could expect each week. Furthermore, through the research it was revealed that the participants found their Friday sessions to be interruptive to their weekend home-visit arrangements – something that was not openly spoken about and addressed during the process, according to them. It would be my recommendation to allow for and encourage open process-related communication and collaboration to occur between the therapist and participants. This would likely facilitate a further sense of independence, belonging, and ownership, and provide a valuable opportunity for their voices to be heard and respected – something beneficial to their emotional development.

The initial sessions at the stables were recorded within my reflective journal to be structured and goal-oriented – important aspects in the EAP process. However, over time, this seemed to diminish, and the sessions appeared to become more spontaneous, lacking clear objectives or consistency. Much time was spent grooming the horses and riding, rather than participating in planned purposeful activities. The participants also recalled that promises were not always kept. One such example involved being informed initially that they were developing their riding skills with the goal of being able to complete a beautiful forest trail. After several sessions, this was not mentioned again. The participants were also told that they would be given their own journals, but this did not materialise. It appears that these valuable opportunities for therapeutic growth were missed. Comprehensive preparation and strategic, purposeful planning for each session would be recommended, with these aims and objectives being communicated to all involved. Flexibility within this structured approach would also, of course, be crucial to allow for unplanned scenarios. Careful planning may have allowed for

various more structured EAP activities to be utilised, such as those documented as being effective in the literature. Bridging and consistency from session to session should also occur, as this would allow for progress to be monitored.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a novice researcher, it is likely that my lack of research-specific skills would have influenced and thus limited the quality of my research. For example, when transcribing the interviews, I became aware that interviewing was an area in which I could improve. At times I led the participants to the responses I expected from them, rather than let them come up with their own suggestions. Furthermore, I struggled to redirect the discussion when the adolescents began to talk in tangents, resulting in the interviews being longer than necessary. Further prompting or exploration of certain responses could also have occurred.

Although each of the participants was able to communicate appropriately in English, they may have been able to express themselves in more detail if the interviews were conducted in their mother-tongue language. However, I was reluctant to involve translators in the interview process due to confidentiality concerns. Furthermore, I anticipated that the participants may have been less willing to share personal information with somebody they did not know or trust. For these reasons, the interviews were conducted in English, despite the above-mentioned limitations.

As I did not intentionally plan to select the group with whom I was involved at The Centre as my research participants, I did not keep a reflective journal throughout the process. This may have contributed significantly to the findings, as my perspective could be presented in more detail and an additional method would, in essence, be introduced (observation). This may have also served to further minimise the potential of researcher bias contaminating the findings.

The scope of this study did not allow for further investigation into the EAP process as it may be implemented by other practitioners and at other therapy sites. Thus, the research findings are limited to one specific context and provide only one example of how EAP can be utilised. Furthermore, it is also limited to a single population group (adolescents in residential care).

5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

I feel that the greatest strength of this study was my personal interest in and passion for the topic. Although I had to be highly cautious of possible researcher bias as a result of this, it made it easy for me to engage fully in the research process, over an extended period of time – another strength. Participating in the EAP process at The Centre for over a year allowed for me to gain a very clear understanding of EAP, as it was utilised at this site, as well as to establish mutually trusting relationships with all involved. When it came time to collect the research data, the participants were able to share their experiences and honest thoughts and feelings with ease and openness. Through this, I believe I was able to acquire wonderfully rich and meaningful data. The case study design also served to strengthen this research as it provided an effective framework in which I could integrate and present these findings.

A further strength of this study was the relatively large group of participants. As a result of this, the research questions could be explored from multiple angles, and many voices could be incorporated, researcher bias minimised, and the transferability of the findings increased. The research could be seen as beneficial to the participants, as it provided an opportunity for them to express themselves to a captive audience, and for their voices to be heard and valued. This is particularly meaningful given the context and backgrounds of the adolescents involved.

5.6 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

As an initial suggestion for future studies, the limitations of this study as outlined above should be considered and alternative research approaches considered.

Due to EAP being a relatively new psychotherapeutic approach in South Africa, there is limited local research on this topic. Further research could explore how EAP is implemented at other sites, how it can be used for different populations, and how it can be relevant within the South African context specifically.

Several personal recommendations can be made, based on my experiences at The Centre. Firstly, it is necessary to spend time engaging in the EAP process prior to beginning the research, particularly if it is something new or unfamiliar. Furthermore, it is essential that, should the research design allow it, adequate time is spent building rapport and fostering trusting relationships with the participants involved. Vulnerable individuals should not be expected to have to share their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings with somebody

they don't know or trust. The researcher-participant relationships should be characterised by authenticity and respect.

5.7 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The gratitude that I feel for having found the confidence to embark on this research is immense. It has been a gruelling challenge compiling this document yet at the same time an absolute privilege to have the opportunity to share this story. Even though I witnessed the EAP process unfolding at The Centre, I did not quite realise the extent to which is was meaningful for the adolescents involved. It was inspiring to hear each of their perspectives in the individual interviews, and then to integrate these with the voices of the social worker, therapist and myself. It became clear just how remarkable each of their journeys was. What also became clear for me was that horses had in fact also been a very significant part of my own emotional journey whilst growing up. This realisation made the research process all the more meaningful for me at a deep and personal level. I have developed a true belief in the value of EAP, having seen it '*in action*' for myself, and a strong desire to share these findings and encourage a greater awareness and support of such an approach in South Africa – despite its '*alternativeness*'. More importantly though: I feel touched to have been a part of this.

"A man on a horse is spiritually as well as physically bigger than a man on foot."

John Steinbeck

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ADDENDUM A

Letter of ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
New Application

23-Oct-2012
HURWITZ, Jaqueline

Protocol #: HS799/2012
Title: **Exploring equine assisted psychotherapy for adolescents in residential care**

Dear Miss Jaqueline HURWITZ,

The **New Application** received on **22-May-2012**, was reviewed by Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on **22-Oct-2012** and has been approved.
Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: **22-Oct-2012 -21-Oct-2013**

Present Committee Members:

Standard provisions
1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

You may commence with your research with strict adherence to the abovementioned provisions and stipulations.

Please remember to use your **protocol number** (**HS799/2012**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

After Ethical Review:
Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required.
The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) number REC-050411-032.

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health (healthres@pgwc.gov.za Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health (Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant parties. For approvals from the Western Cape Education Department, contact Dr AT Wyngaard (awyngaar@pgwc.gov.za, Tel: 0214769272, Fax: 0865902282, http://wced.wcape.gov.za).

Institutional permission from academic institutions for students, staff & alumni. This institutional permission should be obtained before submitting an application for ethics clearance to the REC.
Please note that informed consent from participants can only be obtained after ethics approval has been granted. It is your responsibility as researcher to keep signed informed consent forms for inspection for the duration of the research.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.
If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

Included Documents:
Consent form - Childrens Home
Interview schedule
DESC Checklist
Research proposal
Application form
Consent form-TFRC
Participants consent form

Sincerely,

Susara Oberholzer
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

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ADDENDUM B

Informed consent to conduct research at The Centre

Stellenbosch University
Consent to Participate in Research
Exploring Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for Adolescents in Residential Care
Research Site Consent

I, Jaqueline Hurwitz (MEdPsych Student), from the Department for Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, would like to request permission to conduct research based on the EAP program which has taken place at The Centre. The information from this research will be written up in a thesis document.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a therapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care. I would like to explore and document the experiences and perceptions of those involved in such a program and to see the influence EAP may have had for them.

2. PROCEDURES

The research will involve the following:

- Individual and focus group interviews with a group of adolescents who have participated in an EAP program at The Centre
- Interviews with the Social Worker and therapist
- The use of the researcher's informal personal reflections regarding her experiences as a volunteer at The Centre.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No risks, discomforts, or inconveniences are foreseeable as a direct result of the research process to the participants or professionals involved, nor the horses or the property. Should I become aware of any potential risks or concerns of any nature, these shall be reported immediately to management at The Centre.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research study may assist in helping other professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, to become aware of and better understand EAP. Increased recognition and thus greater utilization of EAP may result in more children and adolescents gaining access to an EAP program, and thus being given the opportunity to experience its potential benefits.

The Centre may benefit indirectly through the increased recognition and utilization of EAP which may potentially result from this research.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any of the participants will remain highly confidential and will only be disclosed with permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms ('fake names') in place of all real names, including the name of The Centre, the staff, and the horses. Any identifying details will be altered in order to ensure nobody can be identified by anybody who may read the thesis.

6. PAYMENT FOR HOSTING OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

There will not be any form of payment or compensation for your participation as the host therapy centre.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The Centre can choose whether or not to provide permission for the study to be conducted. Should permission be provided, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, and we will be happy to help you.

Researcher: Jaqueline Hurwitz

Contact: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Email: 15114686@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Mariechen Perold

Contact: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Email: mdperold@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF THE HOST INSTITUTION

You may withdraw your permission at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research institution, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH INSTUTION

The information above was described to me by Jaqueline Hurwitz in English and/or Afrikaans and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby provide permission allowing for research to be conducted that documents an EAP process which was undertaken at The Centre, as described in sections 1-9, above.

I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Therapist/Owner at The Centre

_____

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

_____   _____

ADDENDUM C

Informed assent form for the adolescent participants

Stellenbosch University
Assent to Participate in Research
Exploring Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for Adolescents in Residential Care
Participant Consent

You are asked to take part in a research study to be done by Jaqueline Hurwitz (MEdPsych Student), from the Department for Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The information from this research will be written up in a thesis document.

You were selected as somebody who could take part in this study because you have participated in an Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) program at The Centre, together with a group of other adolescents living in a children's home, for a period of at least 3 months.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The reason for this study is to explore Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a type of therapy for adolescents living in children's homes. I would like to better understand your EAP journey and to hear your experiences and your perceptions of the process. I would like to explore and document what EAP has been like for you, what it has meant to you, and also how you think it may have influenced you and your life.

2. PROCEDURES

As a **volunteer** participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in one individual interview which is expected to be between 20-40 minutes in duration. You would be asked to share your personal experiences and perceptions regarding the EAP process and the effects it has had on your life. Information may be shared at your own discretion, and you don't have to answer any questions or share any information that you do not wish to. However, you will be asked to ensure that all information provided is accurate and honest.

In addition to an individual interview, you would be asked to participate in one group interview after all the individual interviews have occurred, and the information obtained has been analyzed. During this focus group interview I will share with you some of the themes that have come out of the data analysis, and ask you to verify the information and to provide additional information if you would like to. This will ensure that I am able to describe your experiences and perceptions most accurately or truthfully.

Voice recordings of both the individual interview and focus group interview will be made, with your consent.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It would be helpful for me to have brief background knowledge of how you came to live in the Children's Home and also how you became involved in EAP. In order to do so, with your consent, I would like to meet your legal guardian and ask them a few questions. I would like to know the following information:

- How many years you have lived in the Children's Home
- The reason(s) for your placement in the Children's Home

- The reason(s) for why you were selected to participate in EAP
- Their expectations of EAP for you and for the group as a whole
- Any other relevant information that they may think is important for me to know
- And, their own experiences and perceptions of the EAP process after having been a part of it with you.

If there is anything you would not like your legal guardian to share, you may inform them of this before our meeting. Also, if you would prefer to give me this information yourself you are also welcome to do that instead.

It would also be useful for me to find out more about the specific EAP process in which you have been involved. Thus, I would like to interview the therapist who has been facilitating your weekly sessions. I would like to know the following information from her:

- Information about EAP
- An outline of the specific program in which you have been involved (the plan)
- An overview of the process over the last few months in which your group has been participating (what has happened)
- Her personal experiences, perceptions and reflections

4. USE OF RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

I have also written my own reflections of being a volunteer at The Centre, including from during the last few months in which I was a part of your weekly sessions. In my reflections I have written about what I have experienced as well as what I have observed happening in the sessions, within the group as well as regarding each person involved. I would like to use these reflections as part of my research, with your consent to do so. All names and identifying details will remain anonymous in order to maintain participant confidentiality.

5. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No risks, discomforts, or inconveniences should happen as a direct result of the research process. However, should any of the above arise because of your participation in this research these will be referred to and managed by the Social Worker responsible for ensuring your safety and well-being. Being part of the research should be a safe, comfortable and exciting experience for you.

6. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research study may help other professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, to find out more about EAP. By understanding EAP better, they may be more willing to use it, and therefore more children and adolescents can take part in and benefit from it.

You will not benefit directly from participating in the research.

7. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will not be any form of payment or compensation for your participation.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

All your personal information will remain confidential, including that gained during the interview with your legal guardian, your individual interview, the focus group discussion, as well as within my own

reflections. In other words, nobody reading the study should be able to identify who did, said, or wrote what. Your personal information will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be ensured by using pseudonyms ('fake names') in place of your real names, as well as changing any identifying details, to make sure you will not be identified by anybody who may read the thesis.

All information obtained, including the interview voice-recordings and transcriptions, will be stored safely in a room to which only I have access. They will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required.

9. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may change your mind at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if necessary.

10. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, and we will be happy to help you.

Researcher: Jaqueline Hurwitz
Contact: ████████████
Email: 15114686@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Mariechen Perold
Contact: ████████████
Email: mdperold@sun.ac.za

You can also ask your Social Worker, or the Therapist at the EAP center. They may be able to answer your questions, or contact me on your behalf should you prefer them to do so.

11. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Jaqueline Hurwitz in English and/or Afrikaans and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. By agreeing to participate in the study, I provide consent:

- To participate in an individual interview
- To take part in a focus group discussion
- For voice-recordings of the individual interview to be made
- For voice-recordings of the focus group interview to be made
- For the researcher to conduct an interview with my legal guardian in order to obtain brief background information, as explained to me in Section 3, above
- For the researcher to conduct an interview with the therapist in order to obtain information regarding the EAP process
- For the researcher to use her personal reflections from the EAP process in which I was involved as data
- For the researcher to document the findings from this study in the form of a thesis, according to the confidentiality and ethical criteria as explained above.

Please cross out and sign next to any of the above for which you do not wish to provide consent.

I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject/Participant

_____
Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____
Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

ADDENDUM D

Informed legal guardian consent for adolescent participants

Stellenbosch University
Consent to Participate in Research
Exploring Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for Adolescents in Residential Care
Legal Guardian Consent

I, Jaqueline Hurwitz (MEdPsych Student), from the Department for Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, would like to request consent from you, as legal guardian, to select as participants for a research study those adolescents under your care who are involved in the EAP program at The Centre. The information obtained from this study will be documented in the form of a thesis.

1. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to explore Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a therapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care. I would like to document the journey thus far of a group of adolescents from … Children's Home participating in the EAP program at The Centre. I also hope to explore their experiences and perceptions related to EAP and how involvement in the program may have had an influence on their lives.

2. **PROCEDURES**

As a volunteer participant in this study, the participants will be involved as follows:

   I.   Each participant will take part in an individual interview of between 20-40 minutes long. They would be asked to share their personal experiences and perceptions regarding the EAP process and the effects it has had on their life. They will be informed that they may share information at their own discretion, and they do not have to provide any answers or information should they wish not to.
   II. One focus group interview will occur towards the end of the research process. During this interview participants will be presented with the tentative data which they may then verify or reject. They may also provide additional information, and share their experiences and perceptions as a group.

All interviews will take place at either … Children's Home or at The Centre. Voice recordings will be made of the interviews, and once transcriptions have been made, these will be deleted.

Data will also be obtained, with the consent of the participants, through individual interviews with both the Social Worker and the therapist who have formed part of the EAP team during the weekly sessions. The Social Worker will be asked to provide background information regarding each participant, as well as to share their own experiences and perceptions of the EAP process and the effects it has had on those involved. The participants are aware that this interview will occur, will provide consent for it, and have been provided with the questions which the Social Worker will be asked. An interview with the therapist will occur in order to obtain further information about the specific EAP process in which the adolescents are involved, and an outline and overview of the process that has occurred to date.

The researcher's personal reflections will also, with appropriate consent, form a component of the data. These reflections document the researcher's experiences, observations, and perceptions of the sessions, the process, and the individuals involved.

3. **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

No risks, discomforts, or inconveniences are foreseeable as a direct result of the research process. However, should I become aware of any potential risks or concerns of any nature these shall be reported immediately to the social worker.

4. **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

This research study may assist in helping other professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, to become aware of and better understand EAP. Increased recognition and thus greater utilization of EAP may result in more children and adolescents gaining access to an EAP program, and thus being given the opportunity to experience its potential benefits.

Participants will not benefit directly from this research.

5. **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There will not be any form of payment or compensation for participation.

6. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any of the participants will remain highly confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms ('fake names') in place of participants' real names, as well as altering any identifying details, in order to ensure they will not be identified by anybody who may read the thesis.

All information obtained, including voice recordings, transcriptions and journal entries will be stored safely in a room to which only I have access. They will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required.

7. **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participants can choose whether to be in this study or not. If they volunteer to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participants may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw participants from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, and we will be happy to help you.

Researcher: Jaqueline Hurwitz

Contact: ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉

Email: 15114686@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Mariechen Perold

Contact: █████████

Email: mdperold@sun.ac.za

9.   RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You, as well as any participant may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.   You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.   If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Jaqueline Hurwitz in English and/or Afrikaans and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to the selected adolescents residing at …. Children's Home and who have previously been selected to participate in the EAP program at The Centre, to participate in the research study of Jaqueline Hurwitz, as described above.

At each individual adolescent's discretion, they provide consent:

- To participate in an individual interview
- To take part in a focus group discussion
- For voice-recordings of the individual interview to be made
- For voice-recordings of the focus group interview to be made
- For the researcher to conduct an interview with their Social Worker
- For the researcher to conduct an interview with the therapist at The Centre
- For the researcher to use her personal reflections from the EAP process in which they were involved, as data
- For the researcher to document the findings from the study in the form of a thesis, according to the confidentiality and ethical criteria as explained within the consent form

Please cross out and sign next to any of the above for which you do not wish to provide consent on behalf of the adolescent participants under your care.

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I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Legal Guardian:

_____

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the authority figure concerned at …. Children's Home*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative/Social Worker at …. Children's Home*]. [*H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ *by* _____]

_____   _____

ADDENDUM E

Informed consent for the social worker

**Stellenbosch University
Consent to Participate in Research
Exploring Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for Adolescents in Residential Care
Social Worker Consent**

I, Jaqueline Hurwitz (MEdPsych Student), from the Department for Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, would like to request consent from you, as social worker, to participate in a research study in which adolescents under your care are the primary participants. The information obtained from this study will be documented in the form of a thesis.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a therapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care. I would like to document the journey thus far of a group of adolescents from … Children's Home participating in the EAP program at The Centre. I also hope to explore their experiences and perceptions related to EAP and how involvement in the program may have had an influence on their lives.

2. PROCEDURES

Your voluntary participation will involve providing background information regarding the adolescents under your care who have been selected as the primary research participants for the study. Further, you would be asked to share information regarding your personal experiences and perceptions regarding the EAP process and the effects it has had on the participants.

It would be helpful for me to have background knowledge of each individual participant so that I can understand how they have come to be at the Children's Home and how or why they were selected for EAP. With their written consent, I would like to interview you, as social worker, to obtain this information. The details of the questions to be discussed have been provided to each participant within their consent form, and they have the opportunity to reject this discussion from occurring. They may also choose to share some of this information themselves.

Information may be shared at your own discretion, and you maintain the right to withhold any information which you feel necessary. However, you will be asked to ensure that all information provided is accurate and honest.

One interview will be held in which each participant will be discussed individually, one after another. A discussion related to your experiences and perceptions will follow, within the same interview. The expected duration for this interview is between 60-90 minutes. The interview can be held at either the …. Children's Home, or at The Centre. Voice recordings of the interview will be made. Transcriptions of the data will then be made, and the recordings deleted.

3. USE OF RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

I have also written my own reflections of being a volunteer at The Centre, including from the last few months in which both you and I were a part of the team present at the weekly sessions. In my reflections I have written about what I have experienced as well as what I have observed happening

in the sessions, within the group as well as regarding each person involved. I would like to use these reflections as part of my research, with your consent to do so. All names and identifying details will remain anonymous in order to maintain confidentiality.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No risks, discomforts, or inconveniences are foreseeable as a direct result of your involvement in the research process. Interviews will be arranged at a time that best suits you, and can be held at either … Children's home, or at The Centre.

5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research study may assist in helping other professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, to become aware of and better understand EAP. Increased recognition and thus greater utilization of EAP may result in more children and adolescents gaining access to an EAP program, and thus being given the opportunity to experience its potential benefits.

6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will not be any form of payment or compensation for participation.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with any of the participants, yourself included, will remain highly confidential and will be disclosed only with permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms ('fake names') in place of all real names, as well as altering any identifying details, in order to ensure nobody involved can be identified by anybody who may read the thesis.

All information obtained during the interviews, including the voice-recordings and transcriptions made, will be stored safely in a room to which only I have access. They will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required.

8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You, as a volunteer participant, can choose whether to be in this study or not. Participants may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participants may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and withhold any information. The investigator may withdraw participants from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

9. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, and we will be happy to help you.

Researcher: Jaqueline Hurwitz

Contact: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Email: 15114686@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Mariechen Perold

Contact: ███████████

Email: mdperold@sun.ac.za

10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You, as well as any participant may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Jaqueline Hurwitz in English and/or Afrikaans and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to participate in an interview, as Social Worker, providing background information regarding individuals at the …. Children's Home. These individuals have provided consent to participate in the research study of Jaqueline Hurwitz, as described above and in the participant consent forms. Background information can be provided at my own discretion, and certain information may be withheld. I also consent to sharing my personal experiences and perceptions related to the EAP process. Information which is provided will be accurate and honest. I am aware that a voice-recording of this interview will be made, and provide my consent for this. I also provide consent for the researcher to make use of her own personal reflections of the EAP process in which I was involved, as a form of data, provided confidentiality is maintained.

Please cross out and sign next to any of the above for which you do not wish to provide consent.

I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Legal Guardian:

_____

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the authority figure concerned at …. Children's Home*]. [*He*/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into*

_____ by _____].

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

ADDENDUM F

Informed consent for the therapist

Stellenbosch University
Consent to Participate in Research
Exploring Equine Assisted Psychotherapy for Adolescents in Residential Care
Therapist Consent

I, Jaqueline Hurwitz (MEdPsych Student), from the Department for Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, would like to request consent from you, as psychotherapist, to participate in a research study involving the EAP process as conducted by yourself, at The Centre. The information from this research will be written up in a thesis document.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) as a therapeutic approach for adolescents in residential care. I would like to document the journey thus far of a group of adolescents from … Children's Home who have participated in the EAP program at The Centre. I also hope to explore their experiences and perceptions related to EAP and how involvement in the program may have had an influence on their lives.

2. PROCEDURES

Your voluntary participation will involve partaking in an interview of between 40-60 minutes in which you would be asked to share information regarding EAP as a psychotherapeutic approach, and the specific EAP program in which the adolescent participants have been involved, and which you have facilitated. Further, you would also be asked to provide an overview of the process and to share your own experiences, observations, and perceptions of the group process being explored in this specific case study.

Information may be shared at your own discretion, and you maintain the right to withhold any information which you feel necessary. However, you will be asked to ensure that all information provided is accurate and honest.

The interview will be voice-recorded, with your consent, and transcriptions will be made. The voice-recordings will then be deleted.

3. USE OF RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

I have written my own reflections of being a volunteer at The Centre, including from the last few months in which I was part of the team, headed by you, present at the weekly sessions. In my reflections I have written about what I have experienced as well as what I have observed happening in the sessions, within the group as well as regarding each person involved. I would like to use these reflections as part of my research, with your consent to do so. All names and identifying details will remain anonymous in order to remain confidentiality.

4. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

No risks, discomforts, or inconveniences are foreseeable as a direct result of your involvement in the research process. Interviews will be arranged at a time that best suits you.

5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research study may assist in helping other professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, to become aware of and better understand EAP. Increased recognition and thus greater utilization of EAP may result in more children and adolescents gaining access to an EAP program, and thus being given the opportunity to experience its potential benefits.

6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will not be any form of payment or compensation for your participation.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and from which the participants, yourself included, can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms ('fake names') in place of real names, as well as altering any identifying details, in order to ensure participants will not be identified by anybody who may read the thesis. The name of The Centre, as well as the horses and staff involved will also be replaced with pseudonyms.

All information obtained throughout the research process will be stored safely in a room to which only I have access. They will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required.

8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Further, should consent be provided, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

9. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, or my supervisor, and we will be happy to help you.

Researcher: Jaqueline Hurwitz

Contact: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Email: 15114686@sun.ac.za

Supervisor: Mariechen Perold

Contact: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Email: mdperold@sun.ac.za

10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

The information above was described to me by Jaqueline Hurwitz in English and/or Afrikaans and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to participating in an interview, as head psychotherapist, providing information on EAP, and specifically the EAP process in which I have facilitated at The Centre, as explored in the case study. Information can be provided at my own discretion, and certain information may be withheld. I also consent to sharing my personal experiences, observations, and perceptions of the process. Information provided will be accurate and honest. I am aware that a voice-recording of this interview will be made, and provide my consent for this. I also provide consent for the researcher to make use of her own personal reflections of the EAP process in which I was involved, as a form of data, provided confidentiality is maintained.

Please cross out and sign next to any of the above information for which you do not choose to provide consent.

I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Therapist at The Centre

_____

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*]*.*

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

ADDENDUM G

Interview guide for the adolescent participants

Interview Guide: Participants

- When did you begin at the stables?
- What did you first think when you got told that you were going to be a part of the group working with the horses? What was the first day there like?
- Have your thoughts and feelings changed over time?
- How?
- Tell me about your experiences at the stables.
- Tell me about the horse you have been working with.
- What meaning does the EAP program have for you?
- What is the best and worst part about the program, for you?
- If you could change anything about your time at the stables, what would you change?
- Have you changed because of your time at the stables?
- How?
- Have you noticed any changes in the others in the group?
- What are some of the most important things you have learnt from your time at the stables?
- Do you have any examples of times you were able to take something you learnt at the stables and use it in other times or places in your life?
- What was your relationship with (the psychotherapist) like?
- What was it like having the volunteers and other helpers as part of the group?
- How did you care for the horses?
- What did it feel like or mean to you to care for something else?
- What opportunities, if any, were you given to take responsibility for what happened at the stables and with the horses? What choices or decisions did you have to make, if any?
- What was it like to be a part of the EAP group?
- What was it like working with the others in the group?
- Have your relationships with those in your group changed from before you began at the stables to now?

- What are you relationships like now?
- Did you feel supported by the others in your group?
- What did you do to support or help the others in your group?
- What special connections did you make at the stables? (with who/what?)
- What new skills did you learn at the stables?
- What are you most proud of?
- What was your experience and skills with horses like when you started? And now?
- What do your friends who cannot ride think about you being able to work with horses?
- How did you have to act around the horses?
- Was this easy or hard for you, or did it become easier?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the EAP program?

ADDENDUM H

Interview guide for the social worker

Interview Guide: Social Worker

For each participant:

- Participants name
- Age
- Grade
- Number of years in residential care
- Reason for placement in residential care
- Reason for referral to EAP
- Anything else necessary to know about the participant?
- Initial expectations for the individual participant, related to EAP

General Discussion:

- How did the participants come to be involved in EAP at The Centre?
    - o Where did the Social Worker hear about it?
    - o Why was the decision made to become involved in it?
    - o Funding?
- Initial expectations for the group, related to EAP?
- Experiences and perceptions of the EAP process?
- Perceptions of the participants' individual experiences and growth over the last few months as EAP participants?
- Opportunities for the participants to experience:
    - o Mastery
    - o Independence
    - o Belonging
    - o Generosity
- The impact of these opportunities on the participants?
- Any final comments or anything you would like to share?

ADDENDUM I

Interview guide for the therapist

Interview Guide: Psychotherapist

-   What is EAP?
-   Your training and experience in EAP?
-   The Centre: its history, philosophy, goals, ethos, program
-   EAP, as done specifically at The Centre?
-   How this specific group came to be involved in the program?
-   An outline of the specific program in which the participants in the case study have been involved
-   An overview of the process over the last few months
-   Your personal experiences, observations and perceptions of the process in which this particular group has been engaged in?
-   Anything else you would like to share?

ADDENDUM J

Excerpts from the interview transcripts

CODING KEY:

Initial thoughts and experiences

Activities at The Centre

Thoughts after some time

Experiences/relationships/thoughts with or about the horses

Mastery

Generosity

Independence

Belonging – group dynamics, connecting with others (horses too)

Personal feelings/thoughts/experiences/lessons – the meaning of EAP for them

Benefits/positive outcomes

Participant's context

Reasons for involvement at The Centre

Lessons learnt

Relationships with therapist and volunteers

Responsibility

Friends/outsiders reactions or thoughts

Possible transference/projections

30	Okay when we go there, I don't know, it's just going there, going
31	away from the home, like going to a new environment, just clean your head.
32	**JACQUI**: So it's like an escape in a way?
33	Like an escape, not an escape but just like a get-away.

34	**JACQUI**: And is that needed?
35	████████ I think so yeah.
36	**JACQUI**: After a long week of school.
37	████████ Yes, long week.
38	**JACQUI**: So it's kind of a good thing for you now, you enjoy it?
39	████████ Yes I do.
40	**JACQUI**: What are your experiences at the stables, what do you guys do?
41	████████ Well we groom horses, feed them, sometimes walk with other
42	people on the horses or just go for a ride on the horses and sometimes do work
43	around the stable, cleaning up or help carry stuff and we also just speak to each
44	other.
45	**JACQUI**: Apparently you guys built a bridge the one day, or something like
46	that? I was not there.
47	████████ Okay.
48	**JACQUI**: Some platform for the horses to walk over.

22	**JACQUI**: Okay, but what did you think on that day, when she first told you?
23	████████ I was scared because she said we are going to ride on the horses
24	and I tell her I don't want to go and Tannie ████ said go, it's going to be nice
25	and then I went. It was a bit scary but then I saw the horses I was scared but
26	then afterwards, then… the first time when we rode the horses I felt like a little
27	bit excited.
28	**JACQUI**: So you felt better the more times you went or when you got used to
29	the horses. And now, are you excited?
30	████████ Yes.

147

31	**JACQUI**: So you went from being very nervous to very excited. Okay. And,
32	what was it like? What did you do on that first day?
33	I didn't actually want to touch the horses.
34	**JACQUI**: Okay, you didn't want to touch them.
35	And I was scared, I wanted to cry. And Tannie said don't
36	cry because you are going to make the horse scared.
37	**JACQUI**: Okay, so you were told now you can't cry. Um, and did that make you
38	even more scared?
39	Yeah. I always thought the horse were scary.
40	**JACQUI**: What about them was scary?
41	Their faces. Their backs is big.
42	**JACQUI**: They are really big!
43	Ja!
44	**JACQUI:** And what about their faces?
45	I can't actually say their faces but they are really scary when they
46	look at you like that, and their ears go up. It looks like they want to fight with you.

119	And then we'll ride with them or sometimes we'll just take
120	a walk with them and then get time to like spend with them and then like when
121	we're there it's just like… I don't know, it just lightens us up. You just see
122	everybody is glad and everybody is laughing and ja.
123	**JACQUI:** So it's like a positive or a good energy when everyone is there?
124	So what meaning does the whole program have for you? Why is it important or
125	special for you? Or is it?
126	Well ja I think it's very special because it like brings out the

127	other person in you.
128	**JACQUI:** Okay. What do you mean by that?
129	That you like… that you like, you like never knew you are
130	that kind of person but then when you actually go there then you just express
131	it.
132	**JACQUI:** Okay so you get to be someone else in a way or the other half of
133	you the other side of you… can you give me some examples like how that's
134	been for you?
135	Well I used to be a, a very grumpy person but just like… I
136	just wouldn't smile at anyone and not greet the people. I'll just walk past them
137	and be angry the whole time but when I started like going there I just like saw
138	that life is just like, it's nice. It just… from that day I just, I don't know I've been
139	a friendly person the whole time, so.
140	**JACQUI:** Okay so something's really changed in that way.
141	Ja.
142	**JACQUI:** And are you proud about that change? Are you happy about it?
143	I'm very happy about it.
144	**JACQUI:** How has it made your life better or different or?
145	Well I've made more friends.
146	**JACQUI:** At school or here or?
147	Everywhere.
148	**JACQUI:** Okay.
149	I'm friends with everyone now and, um, just people start
150	talking to me a lot now so that's…
151	**JACQUI:** Okay. So you're more open to having people talk to you and you

152	want to talk to them more.
153	Because usually I'll just like, just look at them and then
154	they will be like scared of me but now they are like, I don't know, it's like I'm
155	their brother.
156	**JACQUI:** Very cool. Any other changes or things that are different?
157	Well I've been calming down when I run in a race and
158	when I play sports and that, and more calmer as well.
159	**JACQUI:** Okay so did you used to be anxious like nervous or?
160	Ja I always used to be nervous like before the race or I
161	would like be negative in a kind of way.
162	**JACQUI:** Okay what do you mean by that?
163	It's like I would run against these guys and I would just tell
164	everyone okay this guy is going to beat me by far and then I would lose.
165	**JACQUI:** Okay.
166	But then when I started going to the horses I'll be like okay
167	now this guy won't beat me. We'll have a tight, a tight race and just be calm
168	before I go there and positive.
169	**JACQUI:** Okay so you've become calm, positive and also more self
170	confident it sounds like?
171	Ja.
172	**JACQUI:** And in other areas as well or?
173	Ja. At school also. I've been more focused on my school
174	work.
175	**JACQUI:** Okay. And have things got easier?
176	Very.

177	**JACQUI:** Okay. So it's really done, you know it's been a really great
178	experience for you it sounds like.
179	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Ja.
180	**JACQUI:** And any other things that you can think of that changed? That's
181	quite a lot already.
182	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ I stopped fighting.
183	**JACQUI:** You stopped fighting? With people around your or?
184	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ No with people around me.
185	**JACQUI:** Okay. Tell me more about that.
186	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Well I just like used to just walk up to someone and then
187	when they pushed me I would beat them up.
188	**JACQUI:** Hmm. So you'd be quite aggressive?
189	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ And I don't know why ja.
190	**JACQUI:** Ja you don't know why.
191	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ But now I'm just like if someone pushed me I would just
192	laugh and I'll just be like okay that's cool.
193	

448	**JACQUI**: How has it been in school, just like a summary?
449	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Well, it's been an experience that has taught me a lot of things, like
450	how to be more responsible for myself and animals and taking care of nature
451	and learning how to connect, not learn but…
452	**JACQUI**: Having an opportunity?
453	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Connecting with other people, getting to know other people and
454	sharing ideas with them and learning new stuff and gaining more knowledge

151

456	about horse riding and learning.
457	**JACQUI**: Okay. I actually do have one more question. Tell me about,
458	because your marks have shot up, remember that time where you spoke about
459	that, does that have anything to do with, has the horse riding contributed any
460	way to that or how do you see that?
461	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ I think so because like the support, everyone there just makes you
462	want to do positive things and just cared about learning more so you can share
463	with more people I guess.
464	**JACQUI**: So it's nice to know so if you do well you can actually bring it there
465	and share it and have everyone excited about it and you experienced that
466	didn't you? Everyone was super excited that day.
467	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Yes. It felt good having people being around, showing people that
468	you trained for it and moving forward and looking back, life is all about and
469	moving forward.

ADDENDUM K

Excerpt from the reflective journal

- ▮▮▮▮ - On first day, attached herself almost immediately to me - worked together with ▮▮▮ Very nervous, but excited-nervous / hyped-up. Spent much time reassuring her = became very dependent in a way. Holding on to me, checking im always with her, even tho others needing assistance & support too. 'Hogging me' to herself it felt like. At 2nd session = big hugs hello, 'you gonna be with me?' = mentioned this to Annemie beforehand, & she partnered me with ▮▮▮ = Sad, sulky faces from J., acting very upset with me [attachment problems → role of trustworthy, consistent horse in this? ✓] → has stayed with ▮▮▮ the whole process so can establish /maintain bond