

**THE EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENTS
IN RESIDENTIAL CARE PARTICIPATING IN
EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING**

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

High-risk behaviour among adolescents places heavy burdens on the public health, social welfare and criminal justice systems of many countries. Today, Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) is increasingly used as an adjunct and experiential intervention programme to support the learning and personal development of adolescents at risk. It combines counselling and educational programmes with interactive activities involving horses (Thomas, 2009). The aim of this investigation was to conceptualize the experiences of these at-risk adolescents in residential care (AIRC), since gaps exist in both international and national research pertaining to studies which focus on exploring adolescents' experiences of taking part in EAL programmes (Holder, 2011).

An interactive, qualitative and multiple case study design was employed in this study. The research was conducted at a Western Cape residential care facility with five adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18, after they had completed a three-week EAL programme. The programme comprised five sessions of one hour each. Data was collected through a projective technique (collage), semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group interview.

The research findings suggested that the at-risk adolescents experienced this Equine-Assisted Learning programme as positive and that it contributed to strengthening their relationships, enhancing attachment, self-esteem, empathy, communication, social competence, and a sense of mastery, as well as opening up future possibilities for them. As a relatively new field of study in South Africa, Equine-Assisted Learning can make a significant contribution to fostering the learning and development of adolescents in residential care.

Key words: Equine-Assisted Learning, Adolescents, Residential care, Risk-taking behaviour, Experiential intervention, Bio-ecological theory.

OPSOMMING

Die hoë-risiko gedrag van adolessente plaas 'n swaar las op lande se openbare gesondheid, maatskaplike welsyn- en kriminele regstelsels en sodoende word 'Equine Assisted Learning' (EAL) toenemend gebruik as 'n aanvullende en ervarings-intervensieprogram om die leer en persoonlike ontwikkeling van adolessente in nood te ondersteun. In EAL, word berading en opvoedkundige programme met interaktiewe aktiwiteite wat perde betrek, gekombineer (Thomas, 2009). Die doel van die studie was om hoë-risiko adolessente in residensiële sorg se ervarings van 'n EAL intervensieprogram te konseptualiseer, aangesien daar op beide internasionale en nasionale vlak 'n gebrek aan navorsing is wat fokus op die verkenning van adolessente se ervaring van deelname aan EAL programme (Holder, 2011).

'n Interaktiewe, kwalitatiewe en veelvuldige gevallestudie ontwerp is in hierdie studie ontplooi. Die navorsing is uitgevoer in 'n Wes-Kaapse residensiële sorg fasiliteit met die hulp van vyf adolessente tussen die ouderdomme van 12 en 18, nadat hulle drie weke lank aan 'n EAL program deelgeneem het. Die program het bestaan uit vyf sessies wat elk een uur geduur het. Data is ingesamel deur gebruik te maak van projektiewe tegniek (collage), semi-gestruktureerde individuele onderhoude asook 'n fokusgroep-onderhoud.

Navorsingbevindings het voorgestel dat adolessente wat risiko beloop, die EAL program as positief ervaar. Dit blyk ook dat dit bygedra het tot die bevordering van sekere aspekte soos verhoudings, hegting, selfbeeld, empatie, kommunikasie, sosiale bevoegdheid, 'n gevoel van bemeestering en die daarstel van toekomstige moontlikhede. 'Equine Assisted Learning' is 'n relatiewe nuwe studieveld in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks, en kan daarom betekenisvol bydra tot die bevordering van leer en ontwikkeling van adolessente in residensiële sorg.

Sleutelwoorde: Equine Assisted Learning, Adolessente, Residensiële sorg, Risiko-gedrag, Ervaringsleer-intervensie, Bio-ekologiese teorie.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Declaration</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Opsomming</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>List of Appendices</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Abbreviations List</i>	<i>xiv</i>

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY1

1.1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH	2
1.2.1	Adolescents in residential care (AIRC)	3
1.2.2	Interventions for adolescents in residential care.....	4
1.2.3	Animal-assisted interventions.....	5
1.2.4	Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)	6
1.3	PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	7
1.3.1	Aims of the research investigation	8
1.3.2	Research question	9
1.3.3	Research sub-question	9
1.4	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	9
1.5	RESEARCH PARADIGM	10
1.6	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	11
1.7	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	11
1.7.1	The research context	11
1.7.2	The role of the researcher	12
1.7.3	Sampling	12
1.7.4	Data collection	13
1.7.5	Data analysis	14
1.8	LIMITATIONS AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS	14
1.9	DEPENDABILITY AND CREDIBILITY	14

1.10	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	15
1.11	CONCEPT CLARIFICATIONS	16
1.11.1	Adolescents.....	16
1.11.2	Adolescents in residential care	16
1.11.3	Risk-taking behaviour.....	16
1.11.4	Equine-Assisted Learning.....	16
1.12	CHAPTER DIVISIONS	17
1.13	CONCLUSION	17

CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE AND EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL): DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING THROUGH THE WAY OF THE HORSE.....18

2.1	INTRODUCTION	18
2.2	ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE (AIRC): A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON	18
2.3	ADOLESCENTS INVOLVED IN RESIDENTIAL CARE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	20
2.3.1	Defining adolescents.....	20
2.3.2	Adolescents in residential care (AIRC)	20
2.3.3	A population group 'at risk'.....	21
2.4	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	23
2.4.1	Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Theory.....	23
2.4.1.1	<i>Process</i>	23
2.4.1.2	<i>Person</i>	24
2.4.1.3	<i>Context</i>	24
2.4.1.4	<i>Time</i>	26
2.5	EXPLORING THE INTERACTION OF AIRC WITH VARIOUS CONTEXTS	27
2.5.1	Macrosystem.....	27
2.5.1.1	<i>Legislation</i>	27
2.5.1.2	<i>Media and culture</i>	28
2.5.1.3	<i>Economy</i>	28
2.5.2	Exosystem.....	29
2.5.2.1	<i>Social support and services</i>	29
2.5.2.2	<i>Poverty</i>	29
2.5.2.3	<i>HIV/AIDS</i>	30

2.5.3	Mesosystem	30
2.5.4	Microsystem	31
2.5.4.1	<i>Interpersonal relationships</i>	31
2.5.4.2	<i>Intrapersonal relationships</i>	33
2.6	DEVELOPMENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF AIRC.....	37
2.7	INTERVENTIONS AVAILABLE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE.....	37
2.7.1	Solution-based counselling.....	38
2.8	ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT)	39
2.8.1	Definition.....	39
2.8.2	Animal-human connection.....	39
2.9	EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING	41
2.9.1	The nature of horses.....	41
2.9.2	The human-equine relationship	43
2.9.3	Equine-Assisted Learning.....	44
2.9.4	The EAGALA model.....	46
2.9.4.1	<i>The Experiential Theory</i>	46
2.10	ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE AND EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL)	47
2.10.1	Relationships.....	47
2.10.2	Attachment.....	48
2.10.3	Communication.....	48
2.10.4	Self-awareness	49
2.10.5	Personal well-being	49
2.10.5.1	<i>Psychological well-being</i>	49
2.10.5.2	<i>Emotional well-being</i>	50
2.10.5.3	<i>Social well-being</i>	50
2.10.6	Mastery of knowledge and skills	51
2.11	CONCLUSION	52

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY53

3.1	INTRODUCTION	53
3.2	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	53
3.3	RESEARCH PARADIGM	54
3.3.1	Interpretive paradigm.....	54
3.4	RESEARCH DESIGN	55

3.5	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	56
3.5.1	Qualitative research	56
3.5.2	Context of the research	57
3.5.3	Selection of sample.....	58
3.5.4	Data collection	60
3.5.4.1	<i>Projective techniques: collages</i>	60
3.5.4.2	<i>Semi-structured individual interviews</i>	61
3.5.4.3	<i>Focus group interview</i>	62
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS	63
3.7	DATA VERIFICATION	64
3.7.1	Credibility	64
3.7.2	Dependability.....	65
3.7.3	Transferability.....	65
3.7.4	Confirmability.....	66
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	66
3.8.1	Informed consent	67
3.8.2	Privacy and confidentiality	67
3.8.3	Beneficence and non-maleficence	67
3.8.4	Analysis and the reporting of findings.....	68
3.9	CONCLUSION	68

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS69

4.1	INTRODUCTION	69
4.2	RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	69
4.2.1	Research context and biographical information of the participants	70
4.3	PRESENTATION OF WITHIN-CASE FINDINGS	71
4.3.1	Participant 1 (P1)	71
4.3.2	Participant 2 (P2)	76
4.3.3	Participant 3 (P3)	81
4.3.4	Participant 4 (P4)	85
4.3.5	Participant 5 (P5)	88
4.4	PRESENTATION OF CROSS-CASE FINDINGS	88
4.4.1	Conceptualization of the experience of participating in an EAL programme	88
4.4.2	Relationships.....	89
4.4.3	Personal well-being	94

4.4.4	Learning and development	97
4.5	SUMMARY.....	100
4.6	CONCLUSION	101

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....102

5.1	INTRODUCTION	102
5.2	INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	102
5.2.1	Theme 1: Conceptualisation of EAL experiences	103
5.2.2	Theme 2: Relationships	103
5.2.3	Theme 3: Personal well-being	105
5.2.4	Theme 4: Learning and development	107
5.3	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	109
5.4	STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION.....	109
5.4.1	Strengths	109
5.4.2	Limitations.....	110
5.5	RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION	110
5.6	CONCLUSION	112

REFERENCE LIST.....113

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1:	Research findings: Themes and categories.....	69
Table 4.2:	Biographical details of the participants	71

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model	25
Figure 3.1:	Visual representation of the research design	56
Figure 5.1:	AIRC experiences of participating in the EAL programme as conceptualized within the bio-ecological framework.....	108

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:	ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FROM THE RESEARCH AND ETHICS COMMITTEE (STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY)	131
APPENDIX B:	INTERVENTION PROVIDER CONSENT LETTER ([REDACTED] AND [REDACTED])	134
APPENDIX C:	INTERVENTION PROVIDER CONSENT LETTER ([REDACTED])	135
APPENDIX D:	RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTION CONSENT LETTER.....	136
APPENDIX E:	PARENT/CUSTODIAN CONSENT LETTER.....	140
APPENDIX F:	PARTICIPANT ASSENT/CONSENT LETTER	144
APPENDIX G:	INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW	148
APPENDIX H:	INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW.....	150
APPENDIX I:	SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW.....	152
APPENDIX J:	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	157
APPENDIX K:	EXAMPLES OF COLLAGES OF PARTICIPANTS 2 AND 3.....	161
APPENDIX L:	AUDIT TRAIL OF THE STEPS TAKEN DURING THE RESEARCH INVESTIGATION	162

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

AAT:	Animal-assisted therapy
AIRC:	Adolescents in residential care
CYCC:	Child and Youth Care Centre
EAGALA:	Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
EAL:	Equine Assisted Learning
EAP:	Equine Assisted Psychotherapy
HIV/AIDS:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired immunodeficiency Syndrome
NARHA:	North American Riding for the Handicapped Association
PPCT:	Process-Person-Context-Time model (Bronfenbrenner Bio-ecological theory)

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISATION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative investigation, embedded in an interpretive paradigm, explored the experiences of adolescents in residential care who took part in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme. Adolescents who have taken to life on the street as a way of escaping detrimental lifestyles at home are an ever-growing concern in South Africa (Motala & Smith, 2003). According to Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994), Le Roux and Smith (1998), and Motala and Smith (2003), such adolescents find themselves living on the streets as a result of an interplay of several contextual factors, among them poverty, unhealthy relationships with parents, and inadequate home care. These conditions lead to their being referred to residential care, and spending a significant amount of time at these institutions receiving part-time care.

Adolescents' behavioural and contingent problems, including underdeveloped psycho-social, interpersonal and educational skills, could be conceptualized as part of the larger social context in which they find themselves, rather than merely individual or biological factors (Smuts, 2004). These adolescents are prone to show less than optimal progress in all developmental areas. Despite this, intervention programmes implemented by the government seem to be limited (Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Motala & Smith, 2003).

In 2006, in an endeavour to improve the access to mental health and educational amenities for street youth, EAL was introduced to South Africa (EAGALA, 2008a). This learning-based programme was seen as a possible additional intervention strategy to address risk-taking behaviour in various population groups, including adolescents in residential care (EAGALA, 2008a). For the purposes of this study, *adolescents in residential care* (AIRC) refers to those who have spent some time living on the streets, but are now in residential care, either full-time or part-time, using the daily services offered by these institutions.

It was against this backdrop that I set out to study the role EAL could play as an intervention modality in the lives of adolescents who receive support from residential institutions. This chapter will review the factors relating to this investigation. Firstly, background information is

given on three topics, (1) adolescents in residential care, (2) animal-assisted interventions, and (3) EAL. This is followed by a discussion on the purpose of the research and the research questions related to it. Attention is given to the research paradigm, the research design and the methodology, which comprises participant sampling, data collection and analysis, as well as data verification. The concluding sections highlight the ethical considerations which applied to the research and explain the key terms using in this dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The transitional phase between childhood and adulthood is a time for exploration and for seeking independence. It involves a biological, emotional and psychosocial metamorphosis (Wild & Swartz, 2012). These changes are characteristic of all adolescents, including those in residential care. While exciting and challenging, this phase can also be marked by experimentation and risk-taking. Adolescents' hazardous behaviour often includes substance use (alcohol and illegal drugs), smoking and/or compulsive unprotected sexual activity, delinquency and absconding from various support environments (Rodham, Brewer, Mistral, & Stallard, 2006; Hessler & Katz, 2010; Reddy, James, Sewpaul, Koopman, Funani, Sifunda, Josie, Masuka, Kambaran, & Omardien, 2010; Dumas, Ellis, & Wolfe, 2012; Meghdadpour, Curtis, Pettifor, & MacPhail, 2012).

Adolescence is further described as a time of striving towards autonomy and the formation of an identity (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). These and several other factors, such as "insecure attachment to parents, high emotionality and impulsivity, ineffective decision-making strategies and association with antisocial peers", may increase the chances of their engaging in risk-taking behaviour (Wild & Swartz, 2012, p. 206). They may also demonstrate such behaviour as a way of dealing with difficult life experiences and situations (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). This is particularly evident in the lives of street youth. Van Rooyen and Hartell (2002) describe life on the street as a *cul de sac* for many adolescents. Experiencing trauma and various forms of abuse at home, they can arrive on the streets with physical and psychological backlogs. These difficulties may continue, even after they receive support from residential care institutions (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994; Motala & Smith, 2003; Thomson, Hirshberg, & Qiao, 2011).

Given the on-going attrition associated with life on the street, adolescents may continue in a state of psychological diffusion and be unable to achieve a coherent sense of identity (Wild & Swartz, 2012). The desire for self-actualization, however, is ever present and continues, irrespective of support from residential care services. Le Roux and Smith (1998) and Theron

and Malindi (2010) argue that AIRC rarely experience the kind of environment needed to shape wholesome emotional self-awareness and self-efficacy, so they remain vulnerable to the ever-present risks in their circumstances. Cimmarusti (2011, p. 91) echoes this, adding that, "from horrible personal childhood experiences, to witnessing violence, to having to contend with the removal from one's home, youths in residential care have had atypical and disruptive events occur in their lives", often having to deal with the consequences of these with only limited support.

Le Roux and Smith (1998, p. 892) highlight the paradox in "showing developmental risk and vulnerability across physical, emotional, social and cognitive/educational areas." Theron and Malindi (2010) concur and underscore the resourcefulness of adolescents who have spent time on the street, showing resilience and masterfully adapting to these challenging circumstances. As a result, AIRC may function on a continuum of opposing extremes; they may be vulnerable, susceptible to risk-taking and in need of being rescued, while at the same time also being resourceful and resilient (Theron & Malindi, 2010). More information on the nature of AIRC is given in the following sub-section.

1.2.1 Adolescents in residential care (AIRC)

AIRC, with specific reference to adolescents who have been living on the streets, are a vulnerable group found in all parts of South Africa (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). The South African Childrens Act, Act 38 of 2005 defines an adolescent who has spent some time on the streets as "any individual under the age of 18 that lives, works or begs on the street, for any period of time" (Mahery, Proudlock, & Jamieson, 2010, p. 8). They are often forced by circumstances to engage in risk-taking behaviour in order to survive. Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994, p. 108) raise concerns about the "complexity" of this phenomenon, suggesting that one should consider the history, structural socio-economic factors and cultural norms found within a macro society in order to fully conceptualize its manifestation.

Motala and Smith (2003) believe that the phenomenon of adolescents living on the streets in South Africa is rooted in Apartheid. In that era, many families disintegrated when children were forced to stay with relatives because of the "migrant labour systems" and "rapid industrialisation" (Motala & Smith, 2003, p. 64). Continuing poverty in sub economic social structures is a further manifestation of the impact that Apartheid had on these communities, contributing to the situation of young people living on the streets (Motala & Smith, 2003). This

was coupled with inadequate and insufficient housing, as well as high levels of domestic violence in local communities (Motala & Smith, 2003).

These societal barriers contributed to various forms of family dysfunction, and are identified as the principle reason why children and adolescents run away from home (Motala & Smith, 2003). Additional factors contributing to adolescents' presence on the streets include negligence, disruption in communities, as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic that leaves children and adolescents without parents or relatives to take care of them (Mahery *et al.*, 2010). In turn, this leads to an increasing demand for residential care treatment and services (Thomson *et al.*, 2011).

The risk-taking activities in which AIRC engage include theft, offering sexual services in exchange for money, food, clothing, or shelter, as well as substance abuse (smoking, glue) to keep hunger pains, cold and feelings of insecurity and loneliness at arm's length (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994; Motala & Smith, 2003). Such behaviour is seen as a mechanism for coping with the emotional, physical and social tensions which these adolescents face, both in themselves and their environment, and as a way of suppressing negative feelings associated with these experiences (Hessler & Katz, 2010; Salami, 2011). Risk-taking behaviour is known to have long-term negative effects on an individual's physical, social, emotional and psychological development. It is therefore essential that these adolescents are given the necessary care services and interventions, specifically focused on reducing their risk-taking behaviour, as well as fostering and strengthening their social, emotional and educational well-being (Shultz, 2005).

1.2.2 Interventions for adolescents in residential care

The risk-taking behaviour of AIRC places heavy burdens on public health and social relief services, as well as on the legal justice system in South Africa, and this is reflected in an increased demand for health services for this particular group (Parry, Myers, Morojele, Flisher, Bhana, Donson, & Plüddemann, 2004). Van Rooyen and Hartell (2002, p. 307) identify the primary needs of AIRC as "physical care, security, to be loved and accepted, a want for new experiences requiring new skills as well as a need for recognition and appreciation." Basic needs such as food and shelter are of primary importance. Unless these are adequately met, AIRC are unlikely to demonstrate a need for other services, such as education or counselling (Van Rooyen & Hartell, 2002).

Even when AIRC have demonstrated a desire for psychological or educational support, professionals and researchers often face difficulties in providing these services (Martin &

Jackson, 2002). Adolescents' collaboration during traditional forms of support cannot always be guaranteed, since they often view adults and professionals with mistrust or apprehension (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994; Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, & Bowers, 2007; Karabanow & Clement, 2004). Manso, Rautkis and Boyd (2008, p. 57) concur, stating that "residential settings pose challenges to developing alliances between youth and therapists", particularly as AIRC have limited experience of sound relationships with adults in their immediate environments. This dilemma has encouraged the development of less traditional ways of support, in an effort to establish trust and respect using alternative means (Shultz, 2005). Among these are experiential therapies, animal-assisted interventions, expressive treatment and learning-based courses, wilderness programmes and adventure-based therapy.

Hessler and Katz (2010) hold that such intervention strategies offer opportunities for risk-taking and experimentation within safe and controlled environments. Ewing *et al.* (2007) further emphasize the urgent need for effective interventions focused on the holistic development of those adolescents who tend towards risk-taking behaviour. Experiential therapies such as animal-assisted interventions, including EAL, are therefore considered as important modalities for AIRC (Geldenhuys, 2001; Karabanow & Clement, 2004).

1.2.3 Animal-assisted interventions

According to Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin and Hopkins (2011, p. 320), the benefits of animal-assisted interventions have increased over the last half century. Results from research conducted by the psychologist Boris Levinson show that the use of "companion animals" in counselling sessions can accelerate the establishment of rapport, as well as increase the motivation of AIRC taking part in therapy or learning-based interventions (Risley-Curtiss, 2010, p. 40). Individuals from children's homes and other residential institutions often have histories of rejection, abuse or neglect and thus have little experience of being loved, respected or valued (Schurink & Mathye, 1993). Exposing them to pets during counselling sessions may strengthen their ability to "requite love when human love has failed" (Bronkhorst, 2006, p. 22).

Fine, Dennis and Bowers (2011, p. 129) and Trotter (2012) maintain that companion animals create a "holding space" in which clients can stand firm, experiencing a sense of safety, comfort and unconditional love in the presence of animals. Katcher (2000, cited in Chandler, 2005, p. 6) noticed that animals likewise become valuable "transitional beings", as they actively interact with clients and support them in their developmental growth (Katcher, 2000 cited in Chandler,

2005, p. 6). Animals also help with self-discovery, promoting welfare and mental health (Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, & O'Callaghan, 2010).

Parshall (2003, p. 48) stresses that incorporating animals into therapy, especially for AIRC, has a significant bearing on well-being and modifies adolescents' interactions, encouraging them to reach for educational and learning goals, and in doing so combining both "healing purposes" and "pleasure". These goals can include "learning how to handle frustration, challenges and fears while also learning healthy communication, problem-solving skills and solution-orientated behaviours" (Trotter, 2012, p. 10). The notion of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) as one type of animal-assisted intervention modality will be explored in the following section.

1.2.4 Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL)

Many studies have documented the use of horses in counselling and learning programmes. These aim to improve individuals' ability to manage difficult life situations and conflicts, as well as to improve their interpersonal functioning (Macauley, 2006; Nimer & Lundahl, 2007). Horses are suited to sessions of this nature because of their power, size and sensitivity, as well as their natural rapport with human beings (Kohanov, 2001; EAGALA, 2009a). The stature of a horse naturally commands respect, which is known to have an effect on the behaviour of adolescents who are exhibiting challenging behaviour (Ewing *et al.*, 2007). Acting as real-life metaphors, horses aid adolescents faced with developmental and learning difficulties (Trotter, 2012). Through interacting and establishing secure and positive relationships with horses, they are empowered more effectively to increase and strengthen their life skills (Bachi, Terkel, & Teichman, 2011; Yorke, Adams, & Coady, 2008).

After their encounters with horses, adolescents often voice feelings of having been understood, loved and accepted unconditionally, which in turn enhance their psychological health and well-being (Bachi *et al.*, 2011). Wild and Swartz (2012) add that young people learn better through direct active experience, making Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) an ideal modality in therapy and experiential learning programmes.

Essentially, EAL includes horses as part of the therapeutic and learning process. It promotes an individual's development and educational growth, under the guidance and supervision of a mental health professional and a specialist in equine behaviour (EAGALA, 2009a). This intervention is open to any individual, regardless of his or her former experience with horses (Jarrell, 2009). The aim is not for participants to learn about horses, but rather to explore and

develop their own skills, as well as to strengthen their personal competencies (Dammann, 2011). This is done through the individual's interaction with the horse, as well as by the response of the horse to the individual. The adolescent can reflect on his or her thoughts, behaviour and emotions, and through this develop more positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Jarrell, 2009).

Although still in its infancy, EAL shows promise of actively addressing the psycho-social and psycho-educational needs of adolescents engaging in risk-taking behaviour (EAGALA, 2008b; Norton, 2011; Yorke *et al.*, 2008). In 2006, EAL network groups and official treatment programmes were established and were made available to the public throughout South Africa. Areas targeted included Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Plettenberg Bay (EAGALA, 2008b). In addition, various treatment programmes for AIRC are funded by private sponsors and organizations in South Africa (Norton, 2011). These offer people from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including AIRC, access to this form of counselling, helping them to develop life skills and addressing their learning needs.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Poverty, violence, poor parent-child relationships, negative peer group involvement as well as depression are significant factors which contribute to developmental, educational and mental health problems in adolescents belonging to vulnerable groups, including both those living on the street and those who are currently in residential care (Cooper, Wood, Orcutt, & Albino, 2003; Hessler & Katz, 2010; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Meghdadpour *et al.*, 2012; Reddy, *et al.*, 2010; Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). Adolescents who are exposed to unfavourable life circumstance are often forced to engage in risk-taking behaviour in order to survive (Motala & Smith, 2003). In doing so, they have to deal with collateral dangers, such as HIV/AIDS, reduced physical and psycho-social functioning, conflict with the law, and even with the increased risk of death (Dumas *et al.*, 2012). Swart-Kruger and Donald (1994, p. 120) concur with this position, holding that the "developmental costs of street life for many thousands of street children and youth - physical, emotional, cognitive and social - are too high to be ignored", even after they have been exposed to the services offered by residential institutions.

South Africa is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government thus has a responsibility to acknowledge and protect the rights of all children in South Africa (Motala & Smith, 2003; United Nations, 1989). As stated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, children and adolescents have the right to be supported and kept safe from bodily,

emotional or psychological harm (Mahery *et al.*, 2010). Those who are abandoned or not taken care of by their families "have a direct claim against the state to be provided with basic nutrition, shelter, health care services and social services" (Motala & Smith, 2003, p. 70).

Community interventions such as EAL programmes should aim actively to involve street youth in those activities which will bring about lasting change and well-being (WHO, 2000). Shultz (2005) notes that to effectively reduce risk-taking behaviour in adolescents, while also addressing their developmental and learning needs, intervention strategies should take into account their need to experiment and to take risks.

It is suggested therefore that alternative and additional methods of intervention, such as EAL, be explored and used in conjunction with current support and risk-prevention programmes. EAL has been documented as a successful method when specifically used in the treatment of adolescents who demonstrate risk-taking behaviour (Yorke *et al.*, 2008). Ewing *et al.* (2007, p. 61) hold that incorporating horses as part of a treatment and learning-based intervention with adolescents with a history of risk-taking behaviour is a "credible area of research", and that future investigations in this particular field should be strongly pursued.

I carried out an extensive literature review on the experiences of adolescents taking part in EAL programmes, but found only a single study conducted by Burgon (2011), *The experiences of at risk young people participating in Equine Assisted Learning*. It seems that internationally there is a dearth of research focused on and exploring adolescents' experiences of taking part in EAL programmes. I also found that current research in the field of EAL in South Africa is equally limited (Holder, 2011). In my own proposed investigation, I therefore sought to fill this gap in the existing literature, as well as offering an introductory exposition of the experiences of South African AIRC participating in an EAL programme.

1.3.1 Aims of the research investigation

The following research objectives were laid down:

- To explore and gain insight into the experiences of adolescents in residential care (AIRC) taking part in Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL).
- To conceptualize the meaning AIRC give to their EAL experiences and the significance it has for them.

1.3.2 Research question

What are the experiences of adolescents in residential care when participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

1.3.3 Research sub-question

What understandings of themselves do adolescents voice after participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The holistic development of an adolescent is a complex and a multi-dimensional process (Wild & Swartz, 2012). It is influenced by a combination of maturing biological, emotional and psychological factors in the individual, as well as by contextual factors in the social milieu (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). These factors coexist at various systemic levels of society. A comprehensive and multi-dimensional theoretical framework was therefore required to conceptualize the experiences of adolescents, as well as the meaning they 'give' to life experiences.

The fundamental theory upon which the present study was based was Bronfenbrenner's *bio-ecological approach*, also known as the "process-person-context-time (PPCT) model" (Swart & Pettipher, 2011, p. 11). AIRC are in constant interaction with their environment. Their behaviour and development are shaped by both personal and contextual factors, including neglect, poverty, peer-group pressure, and poor relations with parents (Le Roux & Smith, 1998, Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994; Motala & Smith, 2003).

During counselling and experiential learning sessions, adolescents engage in social interactions with mental health professionals, equine specialists, horses and other participants (EAGALA, 2008a). In order to conceptualize the participant's experiences and meaning making, an approach had to be incorporated in the study which would allow a thorough analysis of interactions and relationships in various contexts and settings.

Certain aspects of the research were supported by an additional theory, the *experiential theory*, which is applied to Equine-Assisted Learning programmes (EAGALA, 2008a). In this approach, participants in counselling sessions develop insights into their own thoughts, feelings, interactions and behaviour in informal situations (EAGALA, 2008a; Weber, 2005). These

situations are carefully selected by the mental health professionals and equine professionals involved and maintained by reflection, examination, and synthesis. In turn, the participants are required to demonstrate ingenuity, make judgments, and be responsible for the results and outcomes of the counselling sessions.

Both the bio-ecological and experiential theories helped me to conceptualize the experiences of the adolescents who took part in an Equine-Assisted Learning programme, as well as the meanings relating to themselves which they constructed around their experiences. Both these theories will be comprehensively discussed in Chapter two.

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006, p. 562), a paradigm is an "all-encompassing system of practice and thinking, which defines for researchers the nature of their enquiry". The interpretive paradigm was applicable to the proposed study, as I took a nominalist stance in valuing the internal experiences of the participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Each participant's conceptualization of his or her understanding of the EAL programme experience was unique. I therefore explored this process, using an interpretive lens to look at the participants' socially constructed reality (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). This paradigm also allows information to be 'examined through the eyes of the participant, rather than the researcher's, as participants are encouraged to voice their unique understanding about their experiences of the intervention programme and the meaning this experiences has for their lives' (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Three dimensions were needed to conceptualize the paradigm guiding this study. Firstly, ontology raises questions about the nature of the reality under investigation, as well as highlighting what can be known and discovered through this reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Secondly, epistemology stipulates the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge to be discovered, as well as what is to be known. Thirdly, methodology refers to the ways in which the researcher acquires knowledge and brings what he or she believes to be known about the world into view (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Additional aspects relating to ontology, epistemology and methodology of the proposed research study will be reviewed more comprehensively in the third chapter.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mouton (2010) describes a research design as a framework which connects aspects such as the theoretical context, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures in an integrated and strategic way. It is essential that such a design demonstrate coherence across four domains, the research paradigm, the purpose of the research, its context, and the methods and techniques used (Merriam, 2009). An interactive, qualitative and multiple case study design was therefore chosen for this investigation.

This design allowed for both the exploration and conceptualization of the experiences of the AIRC and the meanings they constructed around their experiences after taking part in the EAL programme (Merriam, 2009). To address the research questions, I focused especially on the process and on the influence of the context (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004).

Multiple individual case studies (units of analysis) were explored. Initially, within-case analysis was carried out, as I examined the experiences of each of the selected participants. Cross-case analysis was then conducted to draw a comparison between the single units of analysis in order to synthesize and integrate my findings across the case study (Merriam 2009; Patton, 2002).

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the selection and application of methods suitable to ensuring the accuracy and quality of the data to be collected. Henning *et al.* (2004, p. 33) note that "goodness of fit" is essential when deciding on which methods to use in a qualitative investigation, as these should complement both the research design and research questions.

My focus was on developing an insight into and a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and meaning-making of adolescents taking part in an EAL programme. A qualitative methodology seemed the most appropriate for this investigation (Merriam, 2009). A variety of qualitative methods was therefore used to collect and analyse the research data, allowing me to conceptualize the participants' unique experiences of the EAL programme (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

1.7.1 The research context

My research was carried out at a residential care establishment in the Western Cape, South Africa. This facility focuses on caring for street children and high-risk adolescents under the age

of 18 years. A Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) and a Drop-In Centre are operated under the management of a residential social worker, an auxiliary social worker, youth and care workers in training, as well as support staff. The CYCC offers full-time care for up to twenty-four children and adolescents (both male and female).

The Drop-In Centre caters to the needs of about forty children and adolescents on a daily or part-time basis. Services include food, ablution and washing facilities, together with educational and recreational support. The children and adolescents are from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic groups, as well as both genders, offering a human context appropriate to the research investigation. The EAL programme was facilitated by a registered social worker, a counsellor and an equine professional, who came together for the purpose of the research study. The mental health professionals and the equine specialist were qualified in the Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) model and were experienced exponents of Equine-Assisted Learning. The EAGALA model is presented briefly in Chapter two, Section 2.9.4.

More information on the research context will be given in Chapter three, Section 3.6.1.

1.7.2 The role of the researcher

A qualitative researcher is required to demonstrate various skills and competencies during a research investigation. These include building rapport and trust with the participants, having attentive listening skills, engaging with the participants in an authentic way, while remaining self-reflective and aware of any personal bias (Kelly, 2006; Patton, 2002; Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006b). In Chapter three, Section 3.6.2, the role of the researcher will be given in more detail.

1.7.3 Sampling

Sampling is the process by which the researcher can "get to know people who can travel with her on the journey towards more knowledge about the topic" (Henning *et al.*, 2004, p. 71; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). I selected adolescents in residential care, either fulltime or part-time, using purposive sampling (Rule & John, 2011). Already identified by the residential social worker, they were given the opportunity to participate in an EAL programme. The selection criteria I used were that they:

- had similar backgrounds (having lived/worked on the streets);

- were presently residing in a shelter and/or house of safety or using the services offered by a residential institution, and
- were from diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicity and gender.

These five purposely-selected individuals were between the ages of 12 and 18 years and were chosen irrespective of their gender or cultural and linguistic backgrounds. According to Wild and Swartz (2012), participants in this age group are better able to reflect on their experiences than are their younger peers, as well as having a greater capacity to consider the future consequences of their experiences.

1.7.4 Data collection

Data collection within an interpretative paradigm involves various types of information, including direct quotes from individuals about their experiences, beliefs, perceptions and feelings. These are obtained using interviews, as well as from the analysis of documents and sources in the literature (Henning *et al.*, 2004). The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in a study (Merriam, 2009). Three data collection methods supplied me with information-rich data. These were picture collages of the participants' own experiences, individual interviews, and a focus group interview; together, these allowed me to triangulate the collected data (Patton, 2002).

As a projective method, individual picture collages allow participants to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings in an unstructured, often non-verbal but creative way (Mitchell, 2008). For this study, the participants were asked to create a collage using pictures from magazines to illustrate their experiences of taking part in the EAL programme. They discussed their collages with me directly after completion, giving me the opportunity to conceptualize the meanings they had constructed around their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews, which formed my primary data collection strategy, were conducted after the EAL intervention programme (Merriam, 2009). The literature review guided the structure of the interviews, which were transcribed verbatim after each was completed. Member checking was done with each participant after the discussion of the collages, and the individual interviews validated the data obtained (Henning *et al.*, 2004). A more in-depth discussion on semi-structured interviews will be provided in the third chapter.

After the completion of the collages and the individual interviews, a semi-structured focus group interview was held. The focus group interview inquiries were grounded on the data generated from the collages and the individual interviews. Carried out towards the end of the data collection stage, it obtained high quality information on the collective and shared experiences of the adolescents taking part in the psychological support programme (Merriam, 2009). These data collection methods are further explored in Chapter three, Section 3.6.4.

1.7.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of interpreting and understanding data gathered through the association and reduction of both concrete and abstract information (Merriam, 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This inductive method allows the researcher to make inferences about data so as to formulate possible responses to the research questions (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

Two stages of data analysis are needed in a multiple case-study investigation. Firstly, 'within-case' analyses are conducted, during which data collected from each participant's case study are analysed individually using content analysis. Secondly, 'cross-case' analyses are used to build a broad description which applies to all the individual cases (Merriam, 2009). Finally, categories and themes are identified through coding procedures, as described in Rule and John (2011). The data analysis procedure I used is elucidated more thoroughly in Chapter three, Section 3.6.

1.8 LIMITATIONS AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The focus of this research was solely on exploring the participants' experiences of an EAL programme. I did not include an evaluation of the EAL programme, nor did I indicate the possible outcomes of such a programme.

My assumptions about the chosen methodology included participants being honest about their experiences in their responses during the collage discussions and interview sessions.

1.9 DEPENDABILITY AND CREDIBILITY

In qualitative research, reliability and validity are conceptualized differently from the way they are seen in quantitative studies. Instead, when the soundness of a qualitative investigation is assessed the focus is on the credibility and dependability of the concepts (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). According to Merriam (2009), dependability denotes the extent to which research data can be duplicated should a similar study be carried out. The use of multiple data collection

techniques, such as individual interviews, projective techniques and focus group discussions, safeguards the "consistency and dependability" as well as the credibility of the investigation (Merriam, 2009, p. 222). Once data collection strategies (triangulation) which are congruent with the research orientation (qualitative) and the research design (multiple-case study) have confirmed the emergent findings, the research data may be considered to be trustworthy and accurate (Merriam, 2009).

Additionally, the concept of trustworthiness relates to the degree to which a research study measures what it intends to and how truthful the findings are (Merriam, 2009). Babbie and Mouton (2010) state that to ensure trustworthiness the researcher must engage in continuous critical questioning of all the aspects relating to the study, working rigorously and with precision throughout the investigation to maintain its quality (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Aspects of the dependability, credibility, trustworthiness and triangulation of the findings will be presented in more detail in the third chapter.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical deliberations are an essential part of a qualitative research investigation, ensuring the welfare of all the role-players involved (Henning *et al.*, 2004). To guarantee the ethical soundness of this investigation, I applied for ethical clearance from the Research and Ethical Committee at Stellenbosch University. Ethical clearance (Reference: HS884/2012) was obtained and a copy of this document is included as Appendix A.

I endeavoured to work ethically throughout the investigation. This meant paying careful attention to ethical aspects, obtaining informed consent from all the role-players (Smith, 2005), discussing confidentiality and its implied limits with the participants (Henning *et al.*, 2004), informing them that their participation was strictly voluntary (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), reducing any form of potential harm (physical, emotional, social or psychological) (non-maleficence), and promoting the participants' well-being throughout the investigation (beneficence) (Merriam, 2009). The ethical considerations relevant to this research study are given in more detail in Chapter three, Section 3.8.

1.11 CONCEPT CLARIFICATIONS

1.11.1 Adolescents

For the purpose of this study, adolescents were defined as 12-18 year-old individuals, in a transitional life phase between childhood and adulthood. This stage of development is characterized by "biological, cognitive, emotional and social reorganization with the aim of adapting to cultural expectations of becoming an adult" (Wild & Swartz, 2012, p. 205).

1.11.2 Adolescents in residential care

AIRC can be defined as individuals who have spent time on the street (permanently or transitorily), for the purposes of working, begging and/or living, but who are currently staying in a care institution (full-time) or using the services offered by a residential institution, such as meals, ablution and learning opportunities (part-time) (Motala & Smith, 2003). These care institutions, referred to as 'Children and Youth Care Centres' (CYCC), include *inter alia* children's homes and places of safety, as well as shelters for street children (Mahery, Jamieson, & Scott, 2011).

1.11.3 Risk-taking behaviour

According to Wild and Swartz (2012, p. 205), risk-taking behaviour can be defined as "any behaviour that places a person at risk for negative physical, psychological and social consequences". Such behaviour includes using drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, restricting food intake, overeating (with or without purging), gambling, bullying, delinquency, absconding and/or compulsive sexual activity (Reddy *et al.*, 2010).

1.11.4 Equine-Assisted Learning

Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) is a form of psychological support or counselling guided by a mental health professional and an equine professional in charge of the horses, which can occur in groups or individually (EAGALA, 2009a). It integrates horses in an experience of rapport which facilitates personal development, educational growth and learning as treatment goals, as well as addressing life skills (Nimer & Lundahl, 2007). The process involves interacting with horses, but at ground level alone, the focus being on strengthening the rapport between the adolescent and the horse.

1.12 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

In this first chapter, an orientation of the research investigation was given. The content included the background of the study, the problem statement and the purpose of the investigation, as well as an outline of the methodology used.

The second chapter will put forward the theoretical framework and review the literature relevant to the research questions, thus contextualizing the research topic.

The research design and methodology are discussed in the third chapter, highlighting the rationale of adopting a qualitative inquiry methodology, and explaining the research process, the research design, along with the techniques relevant to a qualitative investigation.

The processing, categorizing and interpretation of data collected during the research investigation will be described in the fourth chapter. Meaning will be assigned to emerging themes, while findings from the literature study will be incorporated in an endeavour to analyse and summarize the research findings.

Finally, recommendations and a conclusion, summing up the empirical evidence and findings from the literature review, will be integrated and highlighted in the fifth chapter.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This first chapter served to orientate the research study and highlighted noteworthy aspects of the investigation. These included the purpose of the study, the problem statement, literature review, and the methodology, as well as ethical considerations. The second chapter will give a detailed review of the extant literature on adolescents in residential care and Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) as an intervention programme to support the development, educational growth and well-being of this specific population group.

CHAPTER TWO

ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE AND EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL): DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING THROUGH THE WAY OF THE HORSE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The second chapter of this research investigation reviews the literature concerning adolescents who were previously working or living on the street, and now are in either full-time or part-time residential care. An exploration of AIRC, in both the international and national arenas, will be given, while the application of Bronfenbrenner's model will illustrate the current reality of South African AIRC and their interaction with various social contexts.

A discussion on animal-assisted therapy, with an in-depth investigation into the nature of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL), will follow, as well as an exploration of the possibilities this intervention modality has to offer specifically to AIRC.

2.2 ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE (AIRC): A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON

AIRC have become a conspicuous phenomenon in the world community. The concept of residential care is universally accepted as a way through which organizations can provide for the diverse needs of children and adolescents, when their families are unable to do as a result of difficult circumstances (Martín, 2012). According to Beukes and Gannon (1996), the idea of facilities providing residential care for children and adolescents originated the mid-eighteenth century during the first major period of urbanization and industrialization. In both European countries and the United States, children were forced to work in mills, mines and factories in the cities, to support families in rural areas. Such children therefore required alternative means of care (Schurink & Mathye, 1993). Wars and the outbreak of epidemics added urgency to the need to establish residential care facilities for those who had lost their parents or families during these events (Beukes & Gannon, 1996).

The Church played a central role in offering care to children and adolescents who were marginalized, placing them in facilities which provided for their basic needs, and these

continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, a new view arose, that of children having the right to be treated as children. Efforts were made to restore children to their biological families. This has been taken further, with a drive to deinstitutionalize children in orphanages. Today, the focus is on collaboration between the residential care institutions and the child or adolescent's family, as well as the local community, to help reintegrate the child or adolescent into a social environment (Beukes & Gannon, 1996).

Despite these efforts to reduce the dependency of children and adolescents on residential care, this remains an area of great concern. Referrals of adolescents for residential treatment have increased considerably during the last decade (Weiler, Helfrich, Palermo, & Zimmerman, 2012). Atilola (2012) suggests that this may partly be connected in certain countries with economic crisis. This in turn has contributed to an increase in social stressors such as poverty, unemployment, and domestic violence, all of which impact on adolescents' physical, emotional and social development (Pelton & Wierson, 2002; Barbarin, 2003).

A "life of want", of abandonment, deprivation and the lack of adequate care at home, have led many adolescents to take to a life on the street as a way to survive (Atilola, 2012, p. 554). Natural disasters, such as tsunamis in South East Asian countries, have led to an increase in residential care programmes serving as alternative care option for children and youths who have experienced "loss, displacement and disruption in their daily lives" (Belfer, 2006, p. 523). It is clear that the residential care phenomenon is now a universal reality, demanding attention from international organizations and governing bodies.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child is seen as a universal standard for nations' responsibility for the welfare of their children and youth (United Nations, 1989). Article 25 of the declaration focuses on realizing the rights of those under the age of 18 (United Nations, 1989). These include the right to a certain basic standard of living, which covers rudimentary needs such as food, shelter and clothing, along with the right to medical and social services (United Nations, 1989).

Countries which have agreed to join hands with the declarations' principles are required to provide these services to all children and adolescents, including those in residential care (Barbarin, 2003; Olivier, 2008). Levin and Haines (2007) stress the need to develop intervention programmes which are culturally and contextually appropriate for those who are in residential care (Pazaratz, 2007). An exploration of residential care in the South African context is given in the following section.

2.3 ADOLESCENTS INVOLVED IN RESIDENTIAL CARE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

2.3.1 Defining adolescents

When conceptualizing a working definition for adolescents in this study, I found that descriptions varied widely according to cultural beliefs and were therefore not collective in nature (Umeh, 2009). Western cultures perceive adolescence as beginning in puberty, from the ages of 10 to 12, and ending when the individual reaches the ages of 18 to 19 years (Umeh, 2009). The World Health Organisation, however, defines adolescents as those between the ages of 10 and 19 years (Atilola, 2012).

In South Africa, according to the Children's Act, Section 38, of 2005, those younger than the age of 18 are classed as children (Shurink & Mathye, 1993). For the purpose of this investigation, however, I will refer to the target group, who were all South African residents between 12 and 18 years of age, as adolescents.

2.3.2 Adolescents in residential care (AIRC)

Levin and Haines (2007) estimate that between 600 000 and 1.2 million children and adolescents in South Africa have undergone the experience of losing parents and are in need of care. According to Van Vilsteren, Haffejee, Patel and Bowman (2011), older relatives, as well as extended family members, have traditionally supported adolescents during these distressing times. Yet with the increase in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the options of care in families have become limited (Moses & Meintjies, 2010). Adolescents are still referred to residential care services "on the assumption that they will receive better healthcare, food, educational opportunities and housing" (Moses & Meintjies, 2010, p. 107). Jelsma, Davids and Ferguson (2011) report that an estimated 29 000 children under the age of eighteen are now cared for across the country in 169 registered children's homes and 37 places of safety, on either a full-time or part-time basis.

Meintjies, Moses, Berry and Mampane (2007) report that many South African residential services do not formally register with the Department of Social Services, despite being compelled law to do so. As a result, they do not have the capital (either in money or manpower) to aid in the development of adolescents.

Skelton (2005, cited in Moses & Meintjies, 2010) identifies two systems of operation in residential care institutions. The first offers a range of diverse services as part of care-giving. Thomson *et al.* (2011) note that these include medical, psychological and educational services, which are offered to adolescents who are either still in the care of parents and family members or who are under the supervision of a social worker in a residential care facility. According to Mahery *et al.* (2011), Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 lists the conditions under which an individual is eligible for care and protection through statutory intervention. These conditions include an adolescent who "has been abandoned or orphaned and is without any visible means of support, lives or works on the streets or begs for a living, has been abused, neglected, or exploited" (Mahery *et al.*, 2011, p. 7).

In the second system, adolescents convicted of crimes in the juvenile court system are referred to the guardianship of the Department of Justice (Olivier, 2008; Marais, 2008). The residential care institutions which provide them with the above-mentioned services are called 'Children and Youth Care Centres' (CYCC), and include children's homes, places of safety, as well as shelters for street children (Moses & Meintjies, 2010; Mahery *et al.*, 2011).

Zegers, Schuengel, Van IJzendoorn and Janssens (2008) note that residential care may entail additional challenges for adolescents, as their experiences of these programmes do not always have positive outcomes. For Van Vilsteren *et al.* (2011, p. 44), the lack of "attachment figures" or of a sense of family may inhibit the development of emotional, social and life skills. Although they may find themselves in a physically safe environment, they may still be at risk due to the interplay between various systemic factors from both their past and present environments (Marais, 2008). The way in which adolescents interact with these influences is a key factor in their personal development (Levin & Haines, 2007). Both these influences and the risks they involve will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.3 A population group 'at risk'

As noted in the Chapter one, South African society today sees a large number of adolescents who are engaged in risk-taking behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse, as well as regularly colliding with the law (Reddy *et al.*, 2010). This behaviour is also seen in AIRC and continues, even after they have been referred to residential treatment or have become involved in the services given by residential institutions.

According to a 2010 survey on the prevalence of risk factors in adolescents between 13 and 18 years, about 17% of adolescents showed high levels of risk-taking behaviour (Wild & Swartz, 2012, p. 205). This included violence (carrying a weapon [36%] or bullying [15%]), unhealthy eating (being overweight [20%] or underweight [8%]), limited physical activity (television or computer games taking more than 180 minutes per day), unsafe sexual behaviour (69%), and the threat of suicide (21%).

Psychosocial and educational problems are among the barriers to learning and development facing AIRC, and posing a significant challenge to the country (Olivier, 2008). Martin and Jackson (2002, pp. 121-122) report that "the educational attainment of children who are, or have been, in care is significantly below that of the general population."

The government has the daunting task of ensuring that all adolescents achieve adequate social, educational and interpersonal skills, so that they can actively contribute to the future of a developing nation. For Reddy *et al.* (2010), this is a multifaceted challenge, one which they believe should be addressed from a systemic perspective. Hooper (2000, p. 9) underscores this, saying that there is no ready solution to addressing the needs of AIRC, apart from "a collection of integrated strategies", including "preventative, intervention and reintegration strategies" across various societal contexts.

The concept of being 'at risk' suggests a set of "cause-effect dynamics", a determinist view which would condemn the adolescent to negative outcomes in the future (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2007, p. 6). Even when given seemingly favourable mental health care, they may continue 'being at risk' (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007). A survey conducted by Hooper (2000) on AIRC who had previously lived on the street, found that they continued to be at risk of negative life outcomes because of their troubled histories and hostile backgrounds. Lyons, Libman-Mintzer, Kisiel and Shallcross (1998) maintain that they should nevertheless be referred for residential care, since they have no alternative care arrangements and are in need of physical, emotional and psycho-social support.

Additional reasons why adolescents become involved in residential care include previous futile attempts at community placement, unsuccessful treatments, as well as fatigued case workers who attempt to justify residential placement as being in the adolescent's best interest (Lyons *et al.*, 1998). Placement in care institutions and interaction with the residential care community thus "offers both opportunities and challenges for youth" for their personal development (Van Vilsteren *et al.*, 2011, p. 44).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of AIRC and the nature of the mutual influences between these individuals and the various social systems with which they interact, I chose Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological theory as the theoretical basis for this study.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Creswell (2009) sees a theory as a lens through which a comprehensive explanation of a phenomenon may be found, helping the researcher to answer the research questions. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development informed my attempt to create a nuanced comprehension of adolescents in residential care, on either a full-time or part-time basis, as well as to conceptualize the role Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) might play in the process. This theory will be presented alongside the experimental theory framework, which will be discussed in section 2.9.4.1.

2.4.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Theory

The Bio-ecological theory plots the relationships between individuals and the social environments in which they find themselves (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010). As a developmental psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner believed that human development should be explored from a holistic point of view, while taking the various systemic contexts and processes into account (Palareti & Berti, 2009). He argued that the extent to which an adolescent is able to reach self-actualization depends significantly on the nature of the systematic interaction between the various social contexts in which he or she operates (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). These interactions are shown in PPCT model, and comprise four elements, summed up as 'Process-Person-Context-Time' (PPCT).

2.4.1.1 Process

Human development does not take place in a vacuum, but in diverse, reciprocal communal settings (Moletsane, 2012). According to Donald *et al.* (2010), an adolescent increases his or her knowledge and skills through progressive bi-directional interaction with the environment. These social exchanges, also referred to as proximal processes, are "face-to-face, long-term" interactions which have an enduring influence on the development of adolescents (Marais, 2008; Donald *et al.*, 2010, p. 40). Understanding an adolescent's interaction with the social context is therefore fundamental to conceptualizing his or her development across all the relevant settings and time periods (Tudge *et al.*, 2009).

2.4.1.2 Person

In assessing social interactions, it is imperative to pay attention to the nature of the proximal processes (mentioned in Chapter two, Section 2.4.1.1.). These vary according to the adolescent's personal characteristics, which embrace both genetic and biological aspects (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). These include features such as age, gender, and physical appearance, as well as mental and emotional resources, skills, intelligence and past experiences (Donald *et al.*, 2010).

Internal features or resources, such as personality, motivation and persistence, may have a unique influence on the manner in which an adolescent interacts with his or her environment (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). While two adolescents may have the same internal resources, their developmental trajectories may differ, depending on the way in which they choose to apply or not to apply these resources.

Depending on their character, these features invite either positive or negative responses from the social environment, thus either improving or inhibiting the adolescent's psychosocial development (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). The way these resources can be applied in various contexts will be examined in the following section.

2.4.1.3 Context

The development of human potential occurs in four interrelated contexts or systems (Donald *et al.*, 2010). These are the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and the microsystem, and are graphically represented in figure 2.1 on the following page. The information is adapted from McWhirter *et al.* (2007, p. 19).

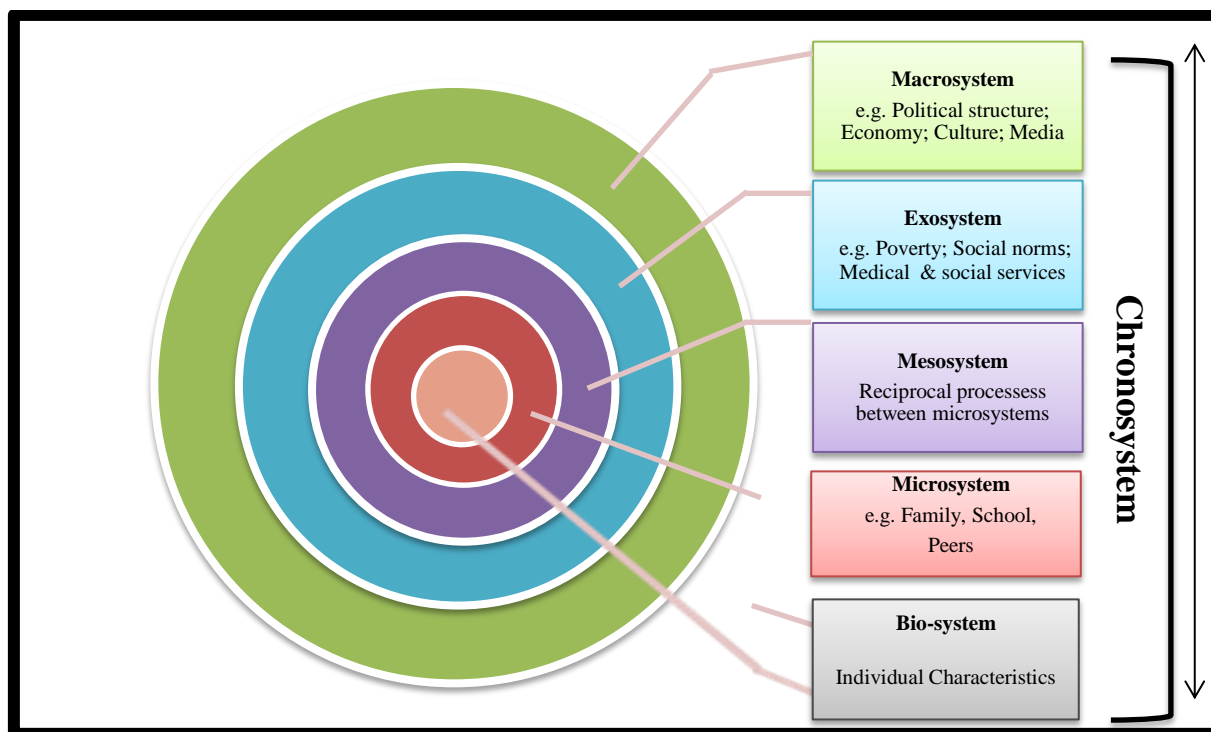


Figure 2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model (Adapted from McWhirter *et al.*, 2007, p. 19)

Tudge *et al.* (2009) describe the macrosystem as the dominant societal scheme of a country, community or culture. It contains the resources, economic and political structures, as well as the values and social norms which govern life within the various sub-contexts. The exosystem, in turn, comprises those practices and connections between various contexts which have a noteworthy effect on the adolescent's welfare. Interactions and relations within this system are referred to as distal/distant processes, as the individual is not at a close interface with the context (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Examples of these practices include social services, local health care services, and the media (Donald *et al.*, 2010).

The mesosystem incorporates the reciprocal processes and interactions which arise in the various sub-microsystems, in which the adolescent actively contributes to his or her physical, mental, social and emotional health, primarily the school, family and peer group (Laura & Chiara, n.d.). Within these sub-microsystems, the adolescent interacts with immediate and familiar individuals or settings (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Attention is also given to patterns of everyday life which mould the adolescent's development as he or she interacts with the social context. The adolescent is thus closely involved in the proximal processes between systems, which determine his or her learning and potential growth (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

In due course, the 'bio-system' was incorporated into the model, as Bronfenbrenner came to believe that an individual's intrapersonal characteristics operate as a system in themselves. He referred to this as the individual's biological and psychological composition, based on his or her genetic and developmental history (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). People's perceptions of the bio-system, in other words, their 'physical selves', are central to how they engage with the nested systems. For adolescents, the perception of the self, determines how they actualize their own human potential, specifically discovering who they are and who they can become (Donald *et al.*, 2010).

2.4.1.4 Time

In the developing individual's environment, time is of the essence, since all development is time-bound. All the features of the PPCT model can be conceptualized as a "change or relative consistency" perspective (Tudge *et al.*, 2009, p. 201). The changes which the adolescent undergoes over time include environmental events, as well as key life transitions. Donald *et al.* (2010, p. 41) add that "developmental time" affects individuals as they interact with and establish social relationships within these systems. Furthermore, these social interactions continuously evolve and morph over time. Bronfenbrenner also relates the chronosystem to the historical events which influence the development of an individual across all the previously mentioned social contexts (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

Against this backdrop, a residential care institution or community may be defined as occupying an "ecological niche" (Palareti & Berti, 2009, p. 29). The promotion of individual development and self-actualization in residential care cannot be guaranteed, as the "synergies" between the energy accruing from both the setting and AIRC, may not always relate effectively to each other (Palareti & Berti, 2009, p. 2).

According to Senefeld, Williams, Perrin, Bishop, Ferber and Miller (2012), each of these nested systems offers an ever-growing diversity of options, sources of growth and opportunities to demonstrate care and support for AIRC. However, the way in which an adolescent chooses to interact with these systems will to a great extent regulate the quality of outcomes of his or her future life course. Explorations of these interactions within the four systems described will offer an understanding of the complexity of AIRC development (Palareti & Berti, 2009; Donald *et al.*, 2010).

2.5 EXPLORING THE INTERACTION OF AIRC WITH VARIOUS CONTEXTS

According to Turney (2010, p. 191), Urie Bronfenbrenner was "an early advocate for understanding the process of adolescent development in context." In a rapidly evolving country like South Africa, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model offers an orientation framework, facilitating exploration of the systemic everyday life contexts and factors of both risk and protection with which AIRC interact (Palareti & Berti, 2009). These contexts, specifically the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem, are discussed below. As changes in the development of adolescents occur within time periods and across all the above-mentioned contexts, noteworthy changes in their development will be mentioned in the presentation of each context.

2.5.1 Macrosystem

According to Marais (2008, p. 9), inclusion of AIRC in a macro community is a "complex and challenging multidimensional concept." To understand this process, I needed to examine the various community "spaces" in which individuals are present and interact, on both direct and indirect levels, as well as how and where their needs and human rights are acknowledged and accommodated (Marais, 2008, p. 3). Factors in the macro level which influence adolescents' development indirectly will be mentioned, including legislation, role of culture and the media, as well as economics.

2.5.1.1 Legislation

In the 1990s, with the broad social and political transformation in South Africa, an optimistic view was taken of the long-term prospects of adolescents, including AIRC. Lund and Petersen (2011, p. 751) report that in 2000 the face of institutional care changed, with a move from the "centralized care", which had been a feature of the Apartheid era, towards "decentralized, integrated and community-based services, being provided within a human rights framework." The legislation which today informs the care and treatment of AIRC is founded on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Olivier, 2008). These policies were incorporated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, along with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Foley, Glancy, Menzano, & Shermeta, 2011).

Resources were made available for adolescents in these community-based facilities in line with the legal guidelines and procedures. The new policies dictated the management of residential

communities, as well as the nature of relations between the residential programme and other societal services (Laura & Chiara, n.d.). These included the "use of trained non-specialists to provide mental healthcare [that] was also suggested as a strategy to increase access in the context of a shortage of mental health specialists" to support the development of AIRC (Lund & Petersen, 2011, p.751).

However, Meintjies *et al.* (2007, p. iii) contend that the reality of South African residential care at ground level is "more complex than being acknowledged in policy discourse and national debates" and that a "discontinuity exists between adolescents' mental health needs and the services provided to them" (Lyons *et al.*, 1998, p. 582). The risk factors with which AIRCs have to contend in residential care may therefore include a failure effectively to apply the legislated practices.

2.5.1.2 Media and culture

According to Meece and Daniels (2008, p. 106), adolescents are often shown in the media as "moody, rebellious, troubled and uncontrollable." These stereotypes shape the perception society has of this age group, as well as conditioning the outlook of the adolescents themselves. AIRC face additional challenges over culture and the role it plays in their development. According to Chardonens (2009), those who display challenging behaviour are often judged and rejected both by other individuals and by organizations in the larger community. Weiler *et al.* (2012, p. 28) maintain that cultural principles as well as the media contribute to the prejudices that some may develop towards marginalized groups who are different from themselves. AIRC therefore face being further ostracized, in response, they may increase their risk-taking behaviour, reinforcing undesirable life course outcomes (Weiler *et al.*, 2012, p. 28).

2.5.1.3 Economy

With the recent economic recession, and the grim socio-economic situation in which many South African communities find themselves, residential care services are often the sole option for a great number of adolescents (Turney, 2010). Economically-related reasons for placing adolescents in residential care include "family violence, especially against women and children; substance abuse; disability" as well as "widespread unemployment" (Levin & Haines, 2007, p. 223). In other words, due to a lack of societal infrastructure and resources because of economic restrictions, adolescents often have limited opportunities to enhance their own welfare.

2.5.2 Exosystem

Community factors are present in the exosystem with which the adolescent does not directly interact, yet which may profoundly affect his or her development. Palareti and Berti (2009) refer to this scheme as an arrangement of relationships among those institutions and practices which have secondary contact with the adolescent and his or her family. Emphasis is placed on managing the continuity of these relationships, which is furthermore founded on the concept of interdependence (Laura & Chiara, n.d.). Those social factors in the exosystem which influence adolescents' development are reviewed below. These range from the availability of social and support services to poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

2.5.2.1 Social support and services

Bettmann, Lundahl, Wright, Jaspersen and McRoberts (2011) argue that the aim of services in residential care is to promote the educational, mental and medical health and well-being of adolescents. These services are often tailored according a 'one size fits all approach'. While they are intended to address a wide range of identified needs, they also limit the chances of optimal personal development taking place in individual adolescents (Meintjies *et al.*, 2007). Due to the accumulative cognitive and social factors which they have experienced prior to the residential care, they may have developed their own coping mechanisms. These can give them a sense of security and familiarity, which they may not find in the social services, unless they can trust those who are suggesting the change (Pazaratz, 2007). In other words, the interaction of an adolescent with social and support services may present as either a risk or protective factor in the adolescent's development.

2.5.2.2 Poverty

According to Moletsane (2012), an estimated 40% of children and youths are exposed to poverty in South Africa. The severe socio-economic conditions have increased the prevalence of poverty in communities and present as a significant risk factor in adolescents' development (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007). Turney (2010) suggests that parental socio-economic status (SES) plays a key role in determining the future education and career paths of adolescents. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have restricted access to resources. Further, their parents have limited knowledge on navigating their children's developmental and educational processes (Moletsane, 2012).

As the "social toxicity" of poverty increases, with the overwhelming financial demands adults experience on a daily basis, adolescents are more frequently exposed to other risk factors (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007, p. 24). These include unstable caring environments, domestic tensions, exacerbated in single-parent families, and domestic violence. These changes in a parent or caregiver's attitude, character or behaviour can place additional strain on family relationships and the fulfilment of the adolescent's potential (Moletsane, 2012).

2.5.2.3 HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a main contributor to the increase of residential care applications in South Africa (Makoro, 2006; Levin & Haines, 2007, p. 223). Adolescents who have contracted HIV/AIDS at an early age face major health and developmental barriers and may experience cognitive and motor development delays, as the central nervous system is affected by the disease (Jansen & Stroud, 2012).

Moses and Meintjies (2010) claim that many social service professionals consider residential care as the optimal alternative for adolescents with HIV/AIDS or who have lost their caregivers due to AIDS, as these institutions are better equipped to address their medical needs, as well as offering a safe environment with quality care. However, adolescents are often placed in care against their will. This may lead them to develop a negative attitude towards social and support services, inhibiting the promotion of their well-being (Pazaratz, 2007).

Van Vilsteren *et al.* (2011, p. 4) summarize social factors such as poverty, abuse as well as HIV/AIDS as "fundamental obstacles to optimum development" for adolescents, including those involved in residential care.

2.5.3 Mesosystem

The mesosystem comprises a process by which the adolescent actively contributes to his or her own developmental experiences, through cooperating with the sub-microsystems. Palareti and Berti (2009) describe this system as an arrangement of the adolescents' relationships with his or her family, friends, as well as with an educational institution. These relational opportunities between the individual and various sub-systems govern the degree to which an individual contributes to his or her own well-being.

Weiler *et al.* (2012) argue that AIRC often exhibited underdeveloped skills, particularly those concerned with social proficiency and relationships. This may initiate conflict between the

adolescent and other individuals in the micro-subsystems, such as teachers or community members, which further negatively affects the adolescent's wellness. If the quality of social interactions is improved, however, this may help the adolescent in overcoming both past and present challenges, promoting openings for the development of optimal health in the future.

Berckmans, Losantos Velasco, Pinto Tapia and Loots (2012) state that mutual trust promotes feelings of being approved and valued, which in turn optimize learning, development and well-being. Manso *et al.* (2008, p. 56) concur, saying that when trust and cooperation are part of the interaction between an adolescent and the microsystem, "positive treatment outcomes through an unconscious intra-personal process of change" take place.

2.5.4 Microsystem

According to Palareti and Berti (2009), microsystems are sub-contexts comprising the family environment, the educational institution as well as peers, with whom the adolescent stands in a direct relational capacity. Emphasis is placed on interpersonal adult-adolescent relationships in these diverse settings, which will be briefly presented.

An exploration of the adolescent's interpersonal relationship with his or her family, peers and school will follow. Finally, a discussion in the intra-personal skills of the adolescent as well as his or her physical, cognitive, emotional and social development will be presented.

2.5.4.1 *Interpersonal relationships*

- ***Family***

Although the adolescent phase is often marked as a time when young people strive for independence within the family environment, family members and parents also play an essential part in their development (Turney, 2010). Berger (2006) notes that these micro-communities aid adolescents' development by providing guidelines and support in a familiar milieu. According to Van Vilsteren *et al.* (2011), the family may not always be an optimal setting in which to foster the development of an adolescent, since various risk factors may be present in the home environment. Unhealthy attachments and connections with a parent or caregiver, inconsistent parenting styles, as well as communication difficulties, may all contribute to an adolescent's unwanted behaviour (Bronkhorst, 2006).

Chardonnens (2009) mentions that a hostile reaction or contempt by parents and other family members for an adolescent's unfavourable behaviour may lead to the adolescent feeling a diminished sense of self-esteem and belonging. Parents and caregivers find it challenging to manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties, and resort to residential care placement options when other intervention strategies, including parental guidance, have failed (Bettmann *et al.*, 2011). Zegers *et al.* (2008) note that the connection between an adolescent and his primary caregivers can play a determining role in future interpersonal relationships. Palareti and Berti (2009) add that the formation of meaningful relationships, characterized by trust and acceptance, is essential for AIRC who have experienced hostile circumstances, helping them both to change the manner in which they perceive themselves and the way they interact with society.

- **Peers**

Peer relations become prominent during the adolescent phase (Wild & Swartz, 2012). Berger (2006) notes that peers choose like-minded friends and vice versa. The interaction between individuals of the same age group can either be constructive or destructive, but adolescents can develop emotionally close connections with peers by spending time together (Turney, 2010).

Through these interactions, adolescents establish social competence and develop the life skills essential to maintaining other interpersonal relationships. As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.2, they can engage in experimentation and risk-taking as part of their identity formation, but such activities often have unfavourable outcomes (Rodham *et al.*, 2006; Dumas *et al.*, 2012).

Bronkhorst (2006, p. 10) comments that the disruptions and trauma AIRC experience "often lead to emotional loneliness and an inability to develop appropriate relationships with peers", as well as with parents and family members. Thus the development of social and emotional competence may not be fully realized. Even after being referred to residential care, they may not reach optimal learning and development because of the continuing legacy of traumatic events earlier in their lives. Weiler *et al.* (2012) note that once AIRC are exposed to life experiences in which they are able to master life skills, such as problem solving and empathizing, their chances of healthy relationships with peers and family members increase, along with their personal well-being and development.

- ***School***

Meece and Daniels (2008) suggest that the school setting has a major influence on the development of adolescents, helping them to become literate and educated citizens. However, in poverty-stricken countries, they are often called on to help provide for the families' physical needs and are unable to attend school (Moletsane, 2012). Given the adverse circumstances AIRC face in their home and community environments, difficulties with regard to their educational attainment are ever-present (Martin & Jackson, 2002).

Risk-taking behaviour such as drug-abuse is an additional factor eroding their chances of gaining the necessary educational competence. The challenge is to actively engage them in educational activities, since many "do not value traditional education, lack the self-management skills needed to succeed, or hold attitudes which interfere with engagement in school" (Bettmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 205). Martin and Jackson (2002, p. 123) highlight the need for educational programmes which allow AIRC to "come into contact with people outside the care system and can give them a sense of achievement and self-efficacy."

Intervention programmes in the broader community therefore need to be considered. Research conducted by Bettmann *et al.* (2011) found that, despite the scholastic difficulties they face, given sufficient support and motivation from the social environment, AIRC can achieve significant academic results.

2.5.4.2 Intrapersonal relationships

The adolescent's intrapersonal relationship comprises the perception the adolescent has about him- or herself. This is based on genetic factors, character and personality traits, as well as on personal resources (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007). During the adolescent phase, individuals may encounter a variety of internal stressors in different developmental domains, which influence the way they interact with social contexts (Wild & Swartz, 2012).

These stressors are related to the physiological and emotional changes which occur during adolescence (Moses & Meintjies, 2010). Contingent factors include poverty, being removed from families, being exposed to substance abuse, and marginalization from the community, all of which can create turmoil in adolescents at various levels of their development (Reynolds, 2009). These levels are reviewed below.

- ***Physical development***

Wild and Swartz (2012) describe adolescence as a critical period in terms of physical growth and physiological changes. Physical maturation of the body, which may occur earlier or later depending on the individual, may present challenges to social and psychological development (Berger, 2006). Meece and Daniels (2008) note that different body parts mature at different rates and these changes may cause feelings of ineptness, leading to adjustment problems for many. Adolescents who mature earlier tend to engage with older individuals and experiment with risk-taking, showing defiant or antisocial attitudes, as well as showing symptoms of depression if they 'do not fit in' with the rest of the age group (Wild & Swartz, 2012).

Adolescents, including AIRC, whose physical development may have been affected by prenatal alcohol consumption or other forms of early childhood trauma, face difficulties in cognitive, social, educational and emotional development, adding to the risk factors which could affect their optimal development (Koller & Hutz, 2001).

- ***Cognitive development***

The socio-economic circumstances in which adolescents find themselves, including prolonged exposure to stress, violence, or a dearth of learning opportunities, can affect and inhibit their cognitive development (Wild & Swartz, 2012). Because of such delays in cognitive maturation, AIRCs may encounter difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships, and in communicating and functioning optimally in social environments.

In addition, as Meece and Daniels (2008) explain, the brain undergoes a change in structure with the onset of puberty. Berger (2006) notes that rational thinking is temporarily displaced by emotional reactions and impulsivity, coupled with the appetite for intense sensory experiences. They engage in activities such as alcohol and drug abuse, which satisfy their craving both for novelty and for risk taking, while ignoring the effects these thrills might have on their intellectual well-being (Wild & Swartz, 2012). These changes in the brain, combined with the unstable social milieu in which many AIRC grow up, can lead to risk-taking behaviour and attitudes which challenge social norms and principles.

- ***Language and educational development***

Slow progress of aspects such as linguistic ability may have serious consequences, leading to precarious thinking and limited aptitudes. Those AIRC who previously lived on the street will

have had limited social interaction with adults and inadequate educational stimulation (Koller & Hutz, 2001). Levin and Haines (2007) suggest that AIRC develop and acquire new information primarily within the residential care context. Language development takes place through social interactions. Exposure to various language-rich experiences, such as educational programmes, is needed to promote communication skills and knowledge of language (Martin & Jackson, 2002).

- ***Psychosocial development***

Psychosocial development in adolescence involves acquiring life skills in preparation for adult roles and for becoming independent (Wild & Swartz, 2012). Unfortunately, the failure of social interaction between the adolescent, family and peers, can severely compromise the development of such skills (Moletsane, 2012). The removal of adolescents from their home environments can be traumatic, leaving them with feelings of rejection and a negative self-image (Marais, 2008). Koller and Hutz (2001) add that social rejection as well as stigma from the community may likewise inhibit the development of interpersonal skills.

AIRC who have a history of living on the street tend to see residential facilities merely as a way to survive and not as a solution to their unfavourable life situation (Koller & Hutz, 2001). The chances of their developing sound relationships with supportive adults, family members or peers in the community are therefore limited. Finely (2008) argues that exposing them to novel experiences will increase their confidence as they interact with unfamiliar individuals, as well as finding success and acknowledgement in situations to which they previously had no exposure. Stanton, McKissock and Dailey (2010) hold that an increase in self-esteem promotes both psychosocial and emotional development, as discussed below.

- ***Emotional development***

During adolescence, young people experience changes with the development of self-esteem (acceptance of self) and self-concept (perception of self). The way others perceive them, in terms of their physical appearance, personality or cognitive ability, plays an important role in their development and to a great extent determines the value they place on their own lives (Wild & Swartz, 2012). As noted above, AIRC face challenges with stereotyping and rejection from people in the community. These erode their self-esteem and self-awareness, leading to risk-taking behaviour and attitudes. Under-development in these domains may reduce their confidence and their power to actualize their own latent skills (Van Vilsteren *et al.*, 2011).

A strong connection has been noted between neglect and an inability to show empathy in those who have experienced abandonment in various forms (Burgon, 2011). Lexman and Reeves (2009, cited in Burgon, 2011, p. 177) define empathy as "an ability to put yourself in another person's shoes and to act in a way that is sensitive to other people's perspectives." The awareness by many AIRC of other people's needs often remains undeveloped. Their own needs are seldom fulfilled, and they are therefore insensitive to the needs of others. Burgon (2011, p. 174) argues that developing empathy is "imperative to the healthy emotional and social functioning of youths", and is thus an area in which AIRC need additional support.

However, Koller and Hutz (2001) found that AIRC are mentally and emotionally healthier than those who continue to live with disorganized families. Such individuals are exposed to adverse domestic circumstances such as poverty, abuse and unhygienic living conditions. Support for healthy emotional development is needed for adolescents to reach their full potential, regardless of the social circumstances in which they find themselves (Wild & Swartz, 2012).

Identity formation, as an aspect of emotional development, is a critical process. This too may not be realized, as AIRC often choose to solve this problem by following a negative pathway while hoping to create an intelligible sense of identity. These attempts to explore and establish their own identity are accompanied by experiential, high-risk activities and socially unacceptable behaviour (Reddy *et al.*, 2010).

According to Kimball (2009), the formation of adolescents' identities is often marked by involvement in spiritual practices and religious thinking. By establishing spiritual connections, they explore concepts such as self-awareness, achieving acceptance and interdependence with others, as well as personal values. Social support professionals need to be aware of the rich presence of spiritual factors at play in the lives of AIRC (Kimball, 2009). These are founded on experiences, beliefs and traditions which have influenced and given meaning to human development across time, as they will continue to do in the future (Kimball, 2009).

In brief, adolescents develop as individuals, regardless of the circumstances in which they may find themselves. In order for them to grow with self-respect and become attuned and dynamic citizens, their basic needs have to be met. These include appropriate care for their well-being, a nurturing 'home' environment, security, and educational opportunities, as well as acknowledgement of their human rights (Koller & Hutz, 2001). Supportive relationships in the various systems in the community are essential to addressing the consequences of trauma (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, 2012). Phillips Swanson

(2010) echoes the above statement and highlights the need for adolescents to receive active, consistent support in their developing years, helping them to build self-awareness and form a healthy identity. These developmental needs are presented below.

2.6 DEVELOPMENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF AIRC

As previously noted, adolescence is a life phase during which young people experience "significant social, cognitive and physical changes as they make the transition to adulthood" (Umeh, 2009, p. 28). These changes lead to various developmental and health-related needs. Additionally, AIRC need support with their well-being, as factors such as poor prenatal care, premature birth and its consequences, as well as parental substance abuse, may have caused a biological interruption in their development (Levin & Haines, 2007).

Even when adolescents have been removed from their homes and their parents' supervision, their history of traumatic experiences leaves them with feelings of rejection and a negative self-image (Marais, 2008). Koller and Hutz (2001) and Bronkhorst (2006) note that those whose needs or desires are not effectively met may develop their own coping strategies to obtain what they need to survive emotionally. These may include showing aggression and defiance. Often these coping mechanisms fail to secure the much-needed support. When this happens, depression, personality disorders and suicidal ideation may follow (Reynolds, 2009).

Weiler *et al.* (2012, p. 29) reason that the social conflicts which AIRC often experience are related to "social justice and diversity related issues." Bettmann *et al.* (2011) argue that intervention strategies should pay attention to developing both social skills and life skills. It should be borne in mind that adolescents can be at different developmental stages when they are referred for residential care (Pazaratz, 2007). Apart from interventions tailored to address the range of their diverse problems, AIRC need the assurance of unconditional love and acceptance in their lives (Bronkhorst, 2006; Marais, 2008).

2.7 INTERVENTIONS AVAILABLE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

Since the democratic elections in 1994, the South African government has introduced a legislative agenda focused on providing children and adolescents with comprehensive community services, addressing their physical, social, cultural and psychosocial needs (Belfer, 2006; Flisher, Dawes, Kafaar, Lund, Sorsdahl, Myers, Thom, & Seedat, 2012). In residential care facilities, the support staff creates a caring environment, offering various activities designed

to address adolescents' developmental difficulties. Such a support team may consist of residential staff, a social worker, a counsellor, psychologists, a psychiatrist, and youth care workers (Reynolds, 2009).

For Pazaratz (2007), the aims of therapeutic and educational programmes include addressing mental health and developmental needs, assisting adolescents to understand the challenges they face, and cultivating effective coping strategies to deal with difficulties in life's wide-ranging framework. These programmes are provided outside the family environment and include adolescents accepted under the following circumstances:

- Individuals awaiting decisions about their placement;
- To safeguard children from exploitation or abandonment;
- To observe and assess children, provide them counselling and other treatment, or
- Assisting them with reintegrating into their families and social groups
- To "receive and care for street children" (Mahery *et al.*, 2011, p. 11).

The programmes are given either individually or in groups, depending on the availability of support staff and resources, as well as on the outcomes of treatment sessions. The theoretical orientation of the strategies used is diverse and is decided upon with the needs of the adolescent in mind.

The theoretical approaches applied in interventions for at-risk adolescents often include solution-based counselling. This will be discussed in the following section.

2.7.1 Solution-based counselling

Solution-focused counselling concentrates on offering an asset-based response to the conflicts adolescents may experience (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007). By focusing on the personal resources and positive behaviour adolescents already demonstrate, less established developmental areas can be addressed. Using solution-focused questions helps them to "identify exceptions and potential solutions to their problems" (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007, p. 140). In addition, adolescents need to become self-aware about taking responsibility for their actions. Mastery of this essential skill will reduce the effects of risk-taking in their lives (Russell-Martin, 2006).

Animal-assisted interventions are treatment modalities designed specifically within the solution-focused counselling framework. Since adolescents find it easier to trust and form a relationship

with an animal, compared with an unfamiliar adult, the animals serve as transitional objects, helping them to regain trust with adults.

Risley-Curtiss (2010) urges mental health and social support professionals to consider referring their clients to counselling which includes animals, such as EAL. Hutchinson (2009, p. 3) concurs and notes that children and adolescents from "abusive situations" who demonstrate either "behavioural or learning disorders" can benefit from animal-assisted interventions.

2.8 ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT)

2.8.1 Definition

Given the aid it can offer to humans, animal-assisted therapy (AAT) has gained increasing recognition over the past 50 years (Dell *et al.*, 2011). Kohanov (2001, p. xii) describes the effect animals can have on people as "life-changing". Mental health professionals such as psychologists, counsellors and social workers now often work in collaboration with animals to expedite their clients' recovery and enhance their well-being (Chandler *et al.*, 2010).

This treatment modality promotes constructive human-animal interaction, drawing on the significant qualities that animals, including dogs, cats and horses, bring to the learning or therapy space (Chandler, 2005). Bronkhorst (2006, p. 10) refers to the Delta Society's definition of animal-assisted therapy, "the utilisation of animals in counselling, which assists in fostering the accomplishment of psychosocial goals via the inherent bond between animals and humans." Further information on the human-animal bond or connection is given below.

2.8.2 Animal-human connection

Since ancient times, the bond between animals and humans has been recognized and documented in prose, poetry, and philosophical writings (Chardonens, 2009; Fine *et al.*, 2011; Gracia, 2010). According to Hall (2005), from the Greek and Roman civilisations through the Middle Ages, people celebrated the value of these creatures and the relationship they had with man in pictures, stories, theatre and dance.

These human-animal bonds continued to be celebrated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and into the twentieth century. Novels such as *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell (1877) and *Lassie Come Home* by Eric Knight (1943) are well-known examples. For Kohanov (2001) and Trotter (2012), the connection between people and animals cannot be rationally explained.

Sigmund Freud, considered by many to be the first to incorporate the assistance of dogs in psychotherapy, strongly advocated this idea and practiced mental health treatments accordingly. He believed that by relating to animals, humans "once again become part of nature and thereby heal many of the rifts in our soul" (Bronkhorst, 2006, p. 5). Ultimately, Freud's legacy of bringing the relationship between a client and canines into therapy sessions developed into a new form of psychotherapy, animal-assisted therapy (AAT) (Wilkes, 2009).

In the mid twentieth century, the psychologist Boris Levinson recognized the advantages of including animals in counselling sessions (Parshall, 2003). Treating an aloof and uncommunicative child, he was pleased to find the child speaking and interacting with his dog, Jingles. Levinson was the first professional to frame animal-assisted therapy as a "self-conscious diagnostic and therapeutic technique," developing the animal-assisted work pioneered by Freud into an adjunctive form of therapy (Wilkes, 2009, p. 33). In his book, *Pet-Orientated Child Psychotherapy*, Levinson showed that using pets in counselling could accelerate the establishment of rapport as well as increase the motivation of individuals in residential care (Risley-Curtiss, 2010).

Inmates from children's homes and other residential institutions often have histories of rejection, abuse and neglect, coupled with scant experience of being loved, respected or valued (Schurink & Mathye, 1993). Exposing them to pets during counselling may strengthen their ability to demonstrate love towards another being, despite not having been loved themselves (Bronkhorst, 2006). Bronkhorst (2006) and Fine *et al.* (2011) agree that animals can take on various roles in the lives of AIRC who have undergone difficult and traumatic experiences. Such roles may include those of "surrogate siblings, confidants, social supports, emotional buffers, and even teachers."

Risley-Curtiss (2010) suggests that the link between adolescents and animals mimics important bonds these individuals may have known during childhood and can be as deeply affecting in nature. Fine *et al.* (2011) support this and mention that companion animals accept them with unconditional love, supporting them while they work through challenging issues.

Additional benefits of such an animal-human bond include promoting the individual's willingness to take part in counselling sessions while creating a sense of calmness and safety (Chandler, 2005; Morrison, 2007; Chandler *et al.*, 2010; Trotter, 2012). Animals are not biased towards biological or cultural characteristics and demonstrate unconditional acceptance towards all persons, making this modality appropriate for use in different mental health or educational

settings (Fine *et al.*, 2011). Chandler (2005) underscores this, noting that interventions of this nature are used today across a wide variety of settings, from residential programmes and private mental health practices to hospitals and prisons. Animals can thus significantly advance the quality of life for people in a broad range of contexts (Hall, 2005).

However, the soundness of animal-assisted interventions has been questioned, as scientific research has not yet firmly established this therapy modality (Wilkes, 2009, p. 34). Moreover, being an adjunct therapy, it is not applicable or suitable for all individuals and families.

Research on the human-animal bond by Morrison (2007) and Risley-Curtiss (2010, p. 42) found that the main reasons why social workers chose not to consider the use of animals in therapy were "client allergies, client's fear of animals, fear of liability, lack of training", and that it was not supported by the mental health organizations for whom they worked. Careful review of the needs and treatment preferences of the adolescent should therefore be done before any form of animal-assisted counselling is considered (Chandler, 2005; Irving, 2013).

Morrison (2007) argues that supervision during sessions is of the utmost importance in ensuring the safety of both the adolescent and the animal. Supplementary factors, such as the adolescent's background and cultural perceptions of the use of animals in therapy, should also be considered. Dell *et al.* (2011) confirm that animals have the capacity to help people find a purpose in life and to develop into fulfilled human beings. An exploration of how horses fulfil this role is presented in the following section.

2.9 EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING

As this investigation focuses on Equine Assisted Learning and the use of horses in intervention programmes for AIRC, it is essential to explore the nature of these creatures more comprehensively. This brief exploration of both the behavioural similarities and the connection between humans and horses, contributes to the researcher's conceptualisation of the participants' experiences of the programme as well as their understanding of themselves.

2.9.1 The nature of horses

Horses have been an integral part of human societies since ancient times (Garcia, 2010; Hall, 2005). Swart (2010) holds that the interaction between humans and horses has continued into the modern world and significantly impacted the development of humankind. Since the mid-17th century, horses have functioned in various capacities, from transportation, draft and farm

work, to the metal-working and mining industries, as well as for war (Parshall, 2003; Kelekna, 2009).

As modern mechanized societies emerged, horses became less important as working animals. They evolved into symbols of social status and prosperity (Hall, 2005), their symbolic stature highlighted in sporting events such as horse racing (Swart, 2010). They also came to act as companions or confidants to many people, since they were perceived as beings with whom humans could share their thoughts, emotions and needs and with whom they could establish a relationship of trust (Chandler, 2005). Irving (2013) maintains that people can often relate to horses more readily because of their similar character traits and the behavioural patterns the two species share.

As herd animals, horses are social beings. Their relationships with each other reflect qualities such as companionship, acceptance and reciprocal nurturing (Trotter, 2012). Prey animals in the wild, they are highly vigilant in nature and sensitive to changes in their surroundings (Wilkes, 2009). They react either in a fight or flight response, depending on their apprehension of the dangers happening in their environment (Pendry & Roeter, 2012). They rely on each other for both physical and emotional safety and collaboration within the herd is essential to ensure their survival (Bachi *et al.*, 2011).

The dynamics within the herd represent to a great extent life-cycle processes such as friendship, rejection, hierarchy, injury, as well as death (Bachi *et al.*, 2011). Communication in the herd is largely physical, with messages of warning and limit-setting, noted in the movement of the tail, licking of lips, kicking movements or the ears being laid back (Kohanov, 2001; Trotter, 2012). In addition, the size of a horse demands respect from other herd members. It is important to note that, to be able to manage or control the power of a horse, the interaction should occur in an apt manner. Bullying, manipulation or aggression of any kind will not encourage sound interaction (Kohanov, 2001).

The functions of mutual grooming include cleaning and the removal of unnecessary hairs. It also serves to strengthen the social bonds between the animals through the act of mutual nurturance (VanDierendonck & Goodwin, 2005). Young horses enjoy engaging in social play. This not only gives pleasure but also serves to strengthen their survival skills, social skills and communication skills, while improving their fitness (VanDierendonck & Goodwin, 2005).

In the light of the above characteristics, Irving (2013) argues that, while horses exhibit similar behaviour to humans, they also reflect human interactions with the world. This makes them suitable as co-therapists in learning-based programmes, as humans can readily relate to them. Chardonens (2009, p. 323) asserts that professionals should therefore not be oblivious to the positive aspects horses bring to sessions, which include supporting individuals in the "mastering of development, behaviour or attachment".

Kohanov (2001) and Kelekna (2009) suggest that mental health professionals today are more aware of the value horses bring to the therapeutic environment, seeing them as intelligent beings who encourage humans to "wake up to the wisdom they (horses) so patiently hold" (Kohanov, 2001, p. xii) about life in general as well as the healing of both body and the soul. Garcia (2010, p. 85) describes the human-equine relationship as one which is "complex and often difficult to articulate." A closer look is taken at this concept in the following section.

2.9.2 The human-equine relationship

Throughout history, the relationship between humans and horses has been characterized by two approaches, followed respectively by European and nomadic societies (Kelekna, 2009). The first is based on human dominance over the horse, where for example horses are expected to be obedient to riders during battle or were required to cooperate while working on a farm or in a mine (VanDierendonck & Goodwin, 2005).

The second approach focuses instead on a strong identification with these creatures, and on understanding and valuing their instinct for cooperative behaviour. The ability to work with horses in this way has been described as "mystical or religious", epitomized by the role of the horseman as a 'Horse Whisperer' (VanDierendonck & Goodwin, 2005, p. 35).

The interaction between people and horses is seen as therapeutic, involving demonstrations of mutual compassion, understanding and respect. Within this relationship of reliance, a shared exchange is manifested in the fulfilment of needs. When people are able to be authentic in their relationship with themselves, they can also foster meaningful connections with animals (Kohanov, 2001). They do not have to pretend or live up to any expectations, except their own. Through their relationship with animals, those who have had traumatic experiences, being ill-treated, rejected or abandoned, can reconnect with feelings of hope, trust, and self-esteem (Chardonens, 2009). Bronkhorst (2006) believes that animals may assume the role of a nurturing parent for those who are prone to difficult or risk-taking behaviour resulting from a

troubled childhood. Thus the equine-human bond may "facilitate a positive re-framing of the individual's relationship to self, to others", as well as in the "greater ecology" of social communities (Garcia, 2010, p. 86).

Chandler (2005, p. 6) stresses that the equine-human therapeutic relationship is "situational and characteristic in nature." In other words, the way it is formed depends on the outcomes of a specific treatment session between clients and horses. For example, in a psychotherapy session where individuals are being helped towards treatment goals, horses can assist in fostering their emotional growth and learning (Thomas, 2009). They can also help them to address educational and social goals, as well as promote the development of life skills (Thomas, 2009).

In the present investigation, I focused on addressing educational and learning goals during an intervention. The modality of Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) was appropriate to the study and will be discussed after an overview of other types of equine-assisted therapies.

2.9.3 Equine-Assisted Learning

EAL is one of several types of equine-assisted therapy which are used globally, and which offer individuals with different mental health needs the chance to achieve well-being through the way of the horse (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009). Although these treatment modalities may differ in their theoretical approach, methodology or the activities used, equine-assisted therapies share a similar motivation, the promotion of essential life skills and developmental well-being, through using horses as part of the therapy (EAGALA, 2009a). Adapted to each individual's specific developmental, educational and mental health needs, equine-assisted therapy comprises the following services.

- ***Therapeutic riding***

In therapeutic riding, people with various disabilities take part in horseback riding, with the focus of mastering riding techniques (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009; EAGALA, 2012a). Particular attention is given to gaining self-assurance through the development of muscle strength and motor control, but the training sessions are also educative in nature (EAGALA, 2012a). The therapeutic riding instructors are certified by organizations such as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA).

- ***Therapeutic horsemanship***

In this programme, the principal focus is on horsemanship skills. People from all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds can be taught to ride horses, as well as to master the skills needed in handling and caring for the animals (EAGALA, 2012a).

- ***Hippotherapy***

The Greek word for horse (hippo) is incorporated in the title of this support modality. Hippotherapy makes use of the movements of a horse's body to stimulate riders and develop their skills (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009). Health professionals such Physical, Occupational and Speech therapists focus their patients on such movements to address treatment goals (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009). The rhythmic three-dimensional movements of horses, whether up, down, forwards, backwards or side to side, can improve balance, muscle tone, and sensory integration (Irving, 2013). These professionals work within a neurological and bio-medical frame of reference (EAGALA, 2012a).

- ***Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy***

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is similar to Equine-Assisted Learning. However, the outcomes of the therapy sessions differ, as do the population group being served and the clinical training of the mental health professionals who are involved. An EAP service facilitates emotional and psychological treatment of a wide range of mental health disorders or psychopathologies (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009). With the horses, a psychotherapist and/or psychologist work in collaboration with an equine specialist to address specific treatment goals. Similarly to EAL, EAP focuses on activities in which the horses are free to choose how they will interact with clients (EAGALA, 2012a).

- ***Equine-Assisted Learning***

Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) helps individuals to develop an awareness of their thoughts and feelings, as well as their actions, by integrating equine-human interactions in counselling-based treatment (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009; Pendry & Roeter, 2012). EAL is also described as a process of "metaphorical training and facilitation", in which open-ended questions are used to explore individuals' difficulties (Prince, 2009, p. 34).

As an educative method, based on experiential learning processes, it offers challenges through direct contact and interaction with a horse, as individuals are encouraged to develop their own solutions to presenting problems in their lives (Prince, 2009; Dell *et al.*, 2011, p. 321). Herbert (2011) notes that an EAL programme aims to strengthen existing assets in individuals as well as promote their awareness of personal character and life skills development. Chardonnes (2009), however, contends that, while horses can serve as valuable aids in counselling, the mental health professional and the equine specialist remain essential to facilitating the therapy process. To this end, both should have up-to-date knowledge of both counselling and horse behaviour, as well as the theoretical framework from which they operate.

For this investigation, the treatment modality followed by the therapists was the EAGALA model, which will be explored in the next section.

2.9.4 The EAGALA model

The EAGALA model offers the services of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy and Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL), which differs significantly from other treatment modalities found in Equine-Assisted Therapy, as noted previously (EAGALA, 2012a). The standard against which EAGALA operates and makes its services available comprises four aspects, namely (1) the use of a team approach; (2) sessions which are solely ground-based; (3) conceptualizing a problem from a solution-oriented methodology; and (4) working according to a code of ethics.

The therapy team, consisting of horses, a certified mental health professional and equine specialist, addresses a broad range of mental health and behavioural conflicts, as well as educational objectives (EAGALA, 2012b). EAP and EAL have been documented in studies focusing on trauma-related disorders, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders (Hutchinson, 2009). These programmes are experiential, allowing individuals to actively participate and contribute to their own psychosocial and educational well-being (Trotter, 2012).

2.9.4.1 *The Experiential Theory*

One of the theoretical frameworks which underscore the practice of EAL is David Kolb's experiential theory of learning. As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.4, this approach is based on gaining insight into personal beliefs, feelings and behaviour by actively taking part in experiential informal learning activities (EAGALA, 2012a).

According to Wild and Swartz (2012), adolescents learn more effectively through active participation in real-life experiences. David Elkind (1981, cited in Wild & Swartz, 2012, p. 214) stresses that adolescents need assistance in order to reflect on experiences, to conceptualize the events, as well as actively to apply what they have learned in their lives.

Therapy and educational programmes incorporating EAL activities can help people to process their experiences, and in particular can "help youth understand that they have the strength and option to choose a more productive path and take back their lives" (EAGALA, 2012a, p. 1). The influences of an EAL programme on the development of AIRC will be presented in the following section.

2.10 ADOLESCENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE AND EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL)

Young people, including AIRC, who have experienced significant trauma during their lives exhibit various responses to these distressful situations, often characterized by fear, anger, distrust, low self-confidence and a sense of failure (Kohanov, 2001). Johnson, Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2006, p. 48) note that they have difficulties with "behaviour, social competence, play, and peer and/or sibling interactions" because of the unfavourable circumstances to which they have been exposed.

While they may have previously experienced uncertainty, hopelessness and rejection in their interaction with others, animal-assisted interventions offer such individuals the opportunity to become confident and competent in the fostering of relationships, as well as other areas of development (Bronkhorst, 2006). These aspects will be discussed below.

2.10.1 Relationships

AIRC often have difficulty forming relationships with others, making it difficult in return for others to relate easily or warmly to them (Dvir, Weiner, & Kupermintz, 2012). The direct yet authentic responses which horses show during counselling sessions can help adolescents to establish a sense trust in others. Manso *et al.* (2008) and Garcia (2010) suggest that taking part in EAL programmes may influence personal morals and principles, transforming the adolescents' relational skills. When they succeed in establishing a warm and deepening relationship with horses their internal working model changes and they become better prepared

for independence and for mature relationships with others, including with family, peers and the broader society (Finely, 2008; Dvir *et al.*, 2012).

2.10.2 Attachment

Ainsworth (2013) defines attachment as an affective connection or bond between humans or animals which over time may draw them closer. Horses offer lonely or isolated individuals the chance to form sound connections and healthy attachments (Trotter, 2012). Children and adolescents in residential care often have limited opportunities to form affirmative attachments, particularly if they have had inconsistent care or been placed in a series of different institutions. For them, this growing relationship with a horse can strengthen facets such trust, a sense of belonging, self-identity and self-confidence (Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Trotter, 2012).

The bond with a horse is strengthened through actions such as grooming, hugging or stroking the animal. Such routines allow adolescents to project feelings of fondness onto the horse, developing appropriate ways of interacting through touch, expressing gentleness, nurturance and mindfulness of the animals' welfare (Bachi *et al.*, 2011; Trotter, 2012).

Chardonnens (2009) adds that individuals who have not yet established good social relations can strengthen their ability to connect with others as they learn to interact with animals. This skill is later transferred to human interactions. Weiler *et al.* (2012, p. 28) state that by "developing pro-social behaviour styles", adolescents are empowered to improve the quality of the interactions they have with the social environment, including the home, and educational and community settings.

Observation and becoming aware of their bond with horses encourages people to reflect on the social relations in their own lives, as well to process perceptions and experiences which have been consolidated in their own minds and emotions. Through this activity, they strengthen their own collaborative and social skills, improving their relationships with each other (Weiler *et al.*, 2012). Horses become "catalysts toward social interactions and connections for interpersonal communication" during these sessions (Trotter, 2012, p. 8).

2.10.3 Communication

Communication is a process in which information is shared or conveyed through the exchange of opinions, ideas or facts using dialogue, illustrations, gestures, writing, as well as behaviour (SAGE, n.d.). Levin and Haines (2007) argue that AIRC are confronted with challenges in their

communication which affect the quality of the relationships in their lives, as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2.

Ratliffe and Sanekane, (2009) stipulate that both verbal and nonverbal communication are present in the interaction between people and horses. For meaningful interaction to occur and for sound relations to be established, AIRC therefore need to demonstrate awareness in the way they communicate with horses (Faa-Thompson, 2010).

2.10.4 Self-awareness

AIRC often demonstrate underdeveloped self-awareness in their behaviour. However, the way horses respond to them can help them more readily to comprehend their own actions (Shultz, 2005). Horses are sensitive creatures and react instantly if they are touched or approached in ways which are not mindful of their needs (Faa-Thompson, 2010). This kind of direct feedback can enable humans to strengthen their observation skills while developing insight into their own personal behaviour (Pendry & Roeter, 2012).

Herbert (2011) confirms this, adding that in this way people become aware of their own behaviour and thought patterns, allowing them to understand other's responses to their actions. Animals bring people into contact with and help them develop "essential, sometimes vital functions", including awareness of personal attributes, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as the need to develop emotional intelligence (Chardonnens, 2009, p. 321).

2.10.5 Personal well-being

2.10.5.1 Psychological well-being

Kohanov (2001) further highlights the power of horses to help people develop the skills, self-assurance and boldness needed to achieve success in relationships in the systems in the larger community. Unlike some other animals, however, horses do not offer unconditional acceptance (Irving, 2013). Authenticity of the soul, body and mind are needed to gain their confidence. Individuals have to look inwards, face their problems head-on and remove any masks before any meaningful interaction can take place (Irving, 2013). However, once a person has entered a state of internal congruence, he or she may receive unconditional acceptance from the horse. In turn, this can lead to a reduction in any anxiety or stress related to problems or difficulties faced in his or her life (Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008).

2.10.5.2 Emotional well-being

Hutchinson (2009) suggests that horses have the ability to screen changes in human behaviour as well as in emotions. Pendry and Roeter (2012) agree, saying that horses' innate nature can reassure those who interact with them. They exhibit none of the human features of being judgemental, discriminating, of criticizing or making assumptions about those of different backgrounds, cultures or socio-economic status (Pendry & Roeter, 2012). This quality enhances the human-horse bond, as people feel accepted, valued and understood, regardless of their social difficulties (Weston-Thompson, 2010, p. 233).

The response of horses to people is solely based on the quality and nature of the relationship present during an interaction. A gentle, non-threatening approach is therefore appropriate (Trotter, 2012). Horses will only respond positively to someone with a temperate nature and "collaborative spirit" (Kohanov, 2001, p. xxi). According to Trotter (2012), interacting with horses in a playful manner allows both people and animals to experience joy and happiness, which strengthens well-being for all concerned.

As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, adolescence is a life phase in which young people can explore and experiment with various negative experiences, such as drugs or alcohol abuse, in an attempt to find and develop a personal identity (Louw, Louw, & Ferns, 2007). Forming a secure bond with a horse allows the adolescent to both develop and commit to a personal identity within a safe 'space' characterized by trust, acceptance and companionship (Phillips-Swanson, 2010). Dumas, *et al.* (2012) add that adolescents who show an increase in dedication to personally relevant values, beliefs and goals, engage in less of the risk-taking behaviour and activities that would otherwise compromise their development.

Stanton *et al.* (2010, p. 201) believe that horses have the power both to confront humans with "existential truths and with matters of life and death" and to inspire the development of personal principles. Section 2.5.4.2 highlights the role spiritual awareness plays in the formation of identity, and how people are challenged with revise their personal beliefs, values and attitudes as they interact with horses.

2.10.5.3 Social well-being

Lyons *et al.* (1998) note that those who frequently engage in risk-taking behaviour often struggle to establish respect not only for themselves but also for others and for their environment. Weiler *et al.* (2012) maintain that at-risk adolescents often show limited respect

for others. However, a 350-550 kilogram horse, which is 14-16 hands tall, naturally tends to command respect. The effectiveness of using horses in therapy and learning-based programmes seems to be at least partly due to their size, power and demeanour (Ewing *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, symbolically a horse's size may act as a visual reminder of the problems or conflicts people may be faced with in their lives (Hutchinson, 2009).

Interaction with this animal, despite initial feelings of fear or awe at the horse's presence, can build respect, self-confidence and social competence (Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009). Manso *et al.* (2008, p. 68) suggest that horses guide individuals to a place of acceptance and respect for authority within a safe environment. Weiler *et al.* (2012, p. 42) agree, noting that people's "potential for healthy long-term functioning will increase" once they learn to respect and appreciate the qualities in others as well as in themselves.

2.10.6 Mastery of knowledge and skills

Inconsistent placement, insufficient support from staff at care facilities, irregular school attendance and lack of academic resources often lead to AIRC having limited developmental and educational skills (Martin & Jackson, 2002). However, therapy with horses can stimulate the reconstruction of knowledge, building future life ideals and possibilities for people as their understanding of the world and perceptions about themselves are challenged during these interactions (Garcia, 2010).

A research investigation (Holling-Brooks, 2009, p. 49) conducted with adolescents who were referred for EAL recorded the following responses from the participants, who were between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years, on their mastery of knowledge, skills and attitudes:

- "Horses have taught me respect for myself, I don't have it, and I want it for myself ... but I got to try to have respect for others and for myself".
- "When I had the horse walking with me with no strings attached, it made me feel like anything is possible".

"They taught me that life isn't always easy, but to keep trying ... try, try, try". In brief, taking part in EAL activities helps adolescents to become aware of their values, abilities, and beliefs, as well as filling personal voids (Garcia, 2010). Most importantly, this modality instils a sense of hope and connection, as adolescents, regardless of their backgrounds or the difficulties they face

in life, gain a sense of acknowledgment, of value and of being loved, through the way of the horse (Trotter, 2012).

2.11 CONCLUSION

As a population group, AIRC are at risk of negative life outcomes, due to the interplay of risk factors such as poverty, abuse and neglect, as well as their underdeveloped life skills, including limited communication, interpersonal skills and self-awareness (Weiler *et al.*, 2012). Horses can engage these individuals both with themselves and with the world around them (Wilkes, 2009). Wilkes (2009, p. 88) argues that animals in a therapy session are "a vehicle to assist people in feeling and experiencing the divine connection that dwells within their being, within others, and indeed, within all creation."

Kohanov (2001) also describes this process of people developing self-awareness about their feelings, thoughts and behaviour, discovering their true value, character, strengths and weaknesses. Equines increase adolescents' understanding of the operation of 'power relations' and the way similar relationships in their lives impact the social contexts in which they find themselves (Garcia, 2010). Gracia (2010, p. 88) argues that the horse-human bond promotes the adolescent's welfare and "his or her inclusion in community, seeing self reflected in other/other reflected in self, and socio-political responsibility toward creating a sustainable environment."

Through using horses, selectively and sensitively, during counselling with adolescents, EAL programmes may be a major tool for professionals in clinical practice, as well as in learning-based programmes (Wilkes, 2009). Gilman and Barry (2003) assert that adolescents' life satisfaction in various community settings will increase, as they apply the newly developed skills obtained from EAL programmes to other areas in their lives. EAL programmes should therefore be strongly considered, as an adjunctive and effective modality promoting the physical, educational and psycho-social well-being of adolescents in residential care programmes.

In the following chapter, the research paradigm, research design and methodology of the study will be put forward.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research investigation was to explore the experiences of adolescents in residential care (AIRC) participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) intervention programme. In doing so, the researcher aimed to conceptualize the meaning AIRC gave to their EAL experiences and to gain an insight into the significance such experiences had for them.

In this chapter, reference is made to the research questions and purpose of the study, while a more extensive discussion of the research paradigm and design, as well the research methodology applied in the investigation, will be presented. In the research methodology section, the context of the research, the selection of the participants, as well as the nature of the data collection techniques applied, are highlighted.

Data was collected through collages, semi-structured individual interviews, as well as a focus group interview. The information pertaining to the analysis of data, verification of the research findings, as well as the ethical considerations which were adhered to throughout the study, will be put forward in this chapter. The chapter concludes with brief summary of the discussions provided.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the investigation and to address the above aims. The primary research question guiding the investigation was:

- i. What are the experiences of adolescents involved in residential care of participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

The sub-research question was formulated to enhance my conceptualization of the participants' experiences of taking part in an EAL programme, taking unique background and contextual factors into account:

- ii. What understandings of themselves do adolescents voice after participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

The purpose of a research investigation is supported by a specific research paradigm or approach to knowledge, as well as a research design and methodology. These will be put forward in the following section.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is a system of principles and practices, based on the research investigator's ontological, epistemological and methodical stance or approach to knowledge (Henning *et al.*, 2004). The nature of the investigation is reflected in these three paradigm dimensions, which in turn guide the researcher's thoughts and actions throughout the inquiry (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The present study mirrored the nature of the interpretive paradigm, which is discussed below.

3.3.1 Interpretive paradigm

According to Cohen *et al.* (2000), the interpretive approach sets out to interpret and make meaning of the world through an exploration of humans' beliefs, engagements and experiences. Given that this approach is subjective in nature, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) assert that the researcher's approach to knowledge is reflected in the three dimensions of a paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Ontology, as noted in Chapter one, Section 1.5, denotes the nature of reality, which in this study comprised multiple and diverse constructed realities which were contextually bound (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Merriam, 2009). The research focussed on exploring the individual experiences of the participants as they interacted with horses in an equine-assisted learning programme, as individuals create their own unique idiosyncratic acuties of reality (Patton, 2002).

Epistemology involves the connection between what is to be known and the researcher's own relationship with knowledge (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The contact between these two systems results in the mutual 'shaping' of both parties (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). According to Henning *et al.* (2004), the contexts in which participants find themselves shape their interpretation and understanding of the world. Knowledge is believed to be socially constructed within the interpretive paradigm (Merriam, 2009). The researcher engages with the participants to record their beliefs, as well as the meanings they give to these reciprocal social interactions

and experiences of the world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 2006). In this study an interpretive qualitative methodology (Babbie & Mouton, 2010) was applied to gain access to the participant's perceptions.

Methodology refers to a research procedure consisting of several methods which are applied by the researcher, to assist him or her in answering the research question and to bring the knowledge discovered to the fore (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). These include, *inter alia*, projective techniques (collage), individual interviews, as well as focus group interviews, which simultaneously address the purpose of the study and offer the means to verify the data obtained (Henning *et al.*, 2004, p. 36). Henning *et al.* (2004) note that the above data collection techniques are suitable for a research study deployed in an interpretive paradigm. The researcher therefore needs to be informed on the philosophies underlying these chosen methods, instruments and procedures, in order to ensure the validity of the data collected. It should also be noted that the interpretive paradigm, with its subjective dimensions, is the "most naturally suited to case study research" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 181), as will be discussed in Chapter three, Section 3.5.1.

The choice of a specific research design in an investigation is guided the researcher's approach to the nature of information to be understood (Henning *et al.*, 2004). A discussion on the research design applied in this study is given in the following section.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a framework which allows for the theoretical paradigm as well as the data collection methods and data analysis procedures to be connected and integrated in a strategic manner (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006; Mouton, 2010). According to Durrheim (2006, p. 34), such a design also serves as a plan which guides the "arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data" in accordance with both the purpose of the investigation and the research questions. Cohen *et al.* (2000, p. 73) concur, stating that a research design is "governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose' as the purpose of the research determines the methodology and the design of the research."

Soundness of fit between the four dimensions of the research design is therefore essential in order for the researcher to answer the proposed research questions and to reach credible and plausible conclusion after collecting and interpreting the data (Henning *et al.*, 2004). These dimensions include the purpose of the study, the research paradigm, the research context and the

procedures employed. The diagram below gives a visual representation of the four dimensions of the design for this study, adapted from Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006).

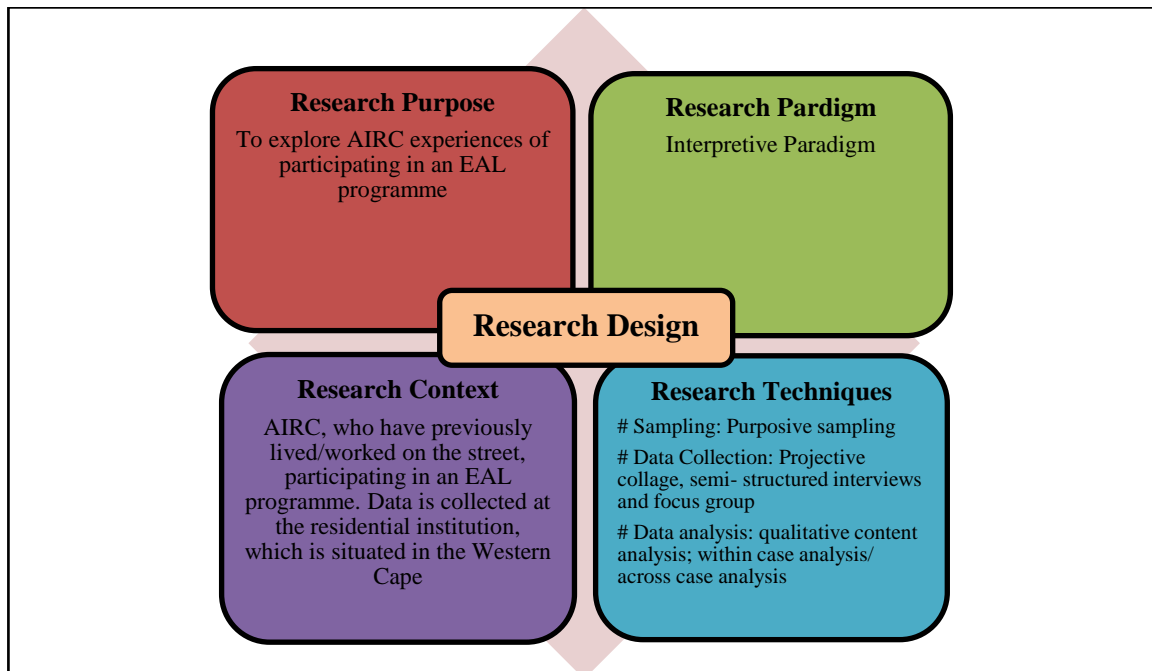


Figure 3.1: Visual representation of the research design (adapted from Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006)

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Henning *et al.* (2004) describe the research methodology as a process of selecting the appropriate research methods, those which reflect both the researcher's approach to the investigation and the rationale of how it will be conducted. This process is guided both by the research design and by the researcher's connection with the research setting and the participants, as well as the means by which data will be obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.7, the participants in this study, the data collection techniques and the data analysis procedures were selected to complement the qualitative methodology followed. These features enabled the researcher to explore, investigate, and gather detailed descriptions of the phenomena involved within their contexts (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

3.5.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be described as a "broad methodological approach" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14) to an investigation, in which the researcher strives to develop an understanding of the

uniqueness of events or situations as they occur in a particular context, as well as the interactions between them (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The questions presented to participants include those about the cultural and social milieu in which they find themselves, as well as the ways in which they make sense of their world (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative researcher pays attention to how these experiences are interpreted and the meaning attributed to the content of such experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

This study was located in a descriptive, qualitative case study. A case study can be defined as "the study of an instance in action" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 181). The researcher is able to obtain a representation of a complex reality in such a way as to give the reader "a sense of being present" in this reality (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 79). According to Merriam (2009), a case study may comprise either a person, a group or an organization, falling within the defined boundaries of that which is being investigated. A case study therefore involves exploring the uniqueness of individuals in their natural settings, through a process of "portraying, analysing and interpreting" the personal accounts they may share (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 79).

In this investigation, an exploratory case study type was employed. In this, separate individual cases are studied jointly to investigate a specific phenomenon which involves all the individual cases (Merriam, 2009). According to Rule and John (2011), the researcher aims to obtain data which will offer insights into the nature of the case or phenomenon under study through active exploration, questioning and reflection. Such a multiple-case investigation allows for comparison across the individual cases, making it possible to formulate general explanations (Rule & John, 2011).

This study investigated the experiences of five adolescents taking part in the same EAL programme, to obtain information about the outcomes for each participant of such an intervention modality. This information, gathered from the various case studies, might deliver relevant data, whether similar or different in nature, which in turn might increase the richness of the case descriptions.

3.5.2 Context of the research

In a qualitative investigation, it is essential that the context or natural setting in which the participants function be explored (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). The researcher therefore endeavoured to define, interpret and conceptualize the research context, so as to enhance my overall understanding of the phenomenon (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006a). I also took into

consideration the historical, social and environmental factors associated with the context (Patton, 2002).

The research data was collected at a residential care institution in the Western Cape. Established in 1997, it provides services and programmes to street and high-risk children under the age of eighteen. The Child and Youth Care Centre gives children and adolescents temporary safe care for approximately six months. They receive full-time care, with separate households for males and females, with each household accommodating ten to twelve individuals.

The Drop-In Centre can accommodate up to forty non-residential children/adolescents and provides meals, ablution and washing facilities, educational support, and activities which promote life skills, such as sport and music. Resident staff includes a manager, who is also a registered social worker, an auxiliary social worker, child and youth care workers in training, as well as support staff. Funding is received from the Department of Social Services, as well as from private sponsorships from the local community.

The collages, individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted in a secluded office inside the residential care institution as to ensure privacy and to limit interruptions and distractions.

3.5.3 Selection of sample

According to Merriam (2009), the process of selecting research participants, or sampling, can have a significant impact on the outcome of a research investigation. Patton (2002) and Henning *et al.* (2004, p. 71) agree, adding that "desirable" participants are those who will be able to assist the researcher in achieving the aims of the study, as well as answering the research questions. This approach is called purposive sampling and was applied to this investigation (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

The sample size in a qualitative research investigation which is guided by an interpretive approach tends to be relatively small, as the researcher pays attention to the 'richness' or depth of information to be collected, rather than to its quantity (Kelly, 2006). During a qualitative investigation, both the sampling criteria and the sample size may be subject to change, reflecting possible changes in the research context, time available, resources, or the participants' willingness to take part (Merriam, 2009).

Initially, six adolescents between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years were identified by the residential social worker as suitable candidates to take part in an EAL programme. While now in the Child and Youth Care Centre, they had previously been exposed to life on the street. These adolescents were from diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, and from both genders. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, only two adolescents from the Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) and three from the Drop-In Centre were at the residential care institution at the start of the EAL programme. This group was aged between twelve and fifteen years and comprised one male and four females. For their biographical details, see Chapter four, Section 4.2.1.

The following selection criteria were devised to facilitate the choice of appropriate and information-rich participants, taking into account the aim of the research and the research design, as well as the changes which occurred during the selection of the participants:

- Adolescents who were in residential care on either a full-time or part-time basis,
- Had similar backgrounds (having lived/worked on the streets), and
- Were from diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, and of both genders.

Five adolescents took part in an EAL programme over a three-week period. Initially, six sessions of sixty minutes each were scheduled, but due to unruly weather and time constraints, only five sessions in total could be managed. After the EAL programme, the research data was collected at the residential institution.

As mentioned in Chapter one, Section 1.7.1, older adolescents are better able than their younger counterparts to reflect on their experiences, as well as to describe the personal meaning these experiences might hold for them (Wild & Swartz, 2012). Additionally, I felt that having participants from diverse backgrounds share their experiences of an EAL programme would enhance my conceptualization of the phenomenon. Weiler *et al.* (2012, p. 27) concur, noting that "diversity, in its many forms, offers the potential to enrich experiences, enhance personal and social interactions, and enrich the community through an offering of multiple perspectives."

While these 'handpicked' individual case studies allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena (AIRC experience of an EAL programme), they could not be generalized to apply to a greater or wider population, although I made attempts to do so, as described later in this Chapter, Section 3.8.3 (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 103; Patton, 2002).

3.5.4 Data collection

In working from an interpretive approach, the researcher can study a phenomenon as it "occurs in the real world" (Kelly, 2006, p. 287), collecting valuable information from natural contexts or settings. Qualitative data comprises direct responses collected from participants, in a natural environment, about their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Henning *et al.*, 2004). These may be in the form of direct observations, interviews, or personal documentation (Patton, 2002).

Henning *et al.* (2004) highlight the importance of triangulation in qualitative research. In this, a number of data collection methods are used to obtain information from different points of view on the same phenomenon. For the purpose of this investigation, I used projective techniques such as collages, semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group interview to obtain data, from which triangulation could later be carried out.

It was essential that the methods used to gather information on the adolescents' experience of the EAL programme be appropriate in terms of both their ages and their stages of development. The rationale behind the selection of the data collection instruments is presented below.

3.5.4.1 *Projective technique: collages*

Butler-Kisber and Podma (2010, p. 2) describe collages as "useful interpretive tools that inform experiential research approaches," making them appropriate for this investigation. This open-ended method offers the possibility of generating unexpected data from the participants' perspectives which might not be obtained through other qualitative data techniques, such as observation or interviewing (Rule & John, 2011). Encouraging the expression of perceptions, thoughts and feelings in an unstructured, creative and non-verbal way allows the participants the freedom to express their experiences in an honest and authentic manner (Mitchell, 2008).

According to the residential social worker, because of environmental factors, the majority of the participants faced barriers to expression in their use of written language. Martin and Jackson (2002) echo this, maintaining that adolescents in residential care present with numerous educational and language challenges due to an interplay of factors, including instability in placements, irregular attendance of school, and limited academic resources. Rule and John (2011) point out that using innovative data collection methods can increase the involvement of those participants who experience barriers related to language. I therefore chose collages as a method which allowed the participants to voice their experiences in a visual, concrete and non-threatening way, using pictures, drawings, written words or symbols.

The five participants, one male and four females, created their collages using a variety of materials, including pictures, pens, cardboard and glue (see Appendix L). I asked them to create a collage which illustrated their experiences of taking part in the EAL programme. Once they were completed, I asked each participant to share the content of his or her collage, while making brief notes on the responses of the others. The duration of these sessions varied between ten and twenty minutes.

At the beginning of each of the semi-structured individual interviews, I made references to the participant's own collage. This helped to put him or her at ease and to re-connect with the experience of an EAL programme. A discussion on the interviews conducted in this investigation is presented in the following section.

3.5.4.2 *Semi-structured individual interviews*

Since the participants' subjective worlds are of great interest to the qualitative researcher, they are encouraged to voice their perceptions of reality through the natural and universal means of conversation (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Kelly (2006) sees interviewing as a natural form of interaction, giving the researcher the opportunity to develop an understanding of a phenomenon from the participant's point of view, while collecting data not always available through direct observation (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

The researcher becomes aware of "what is in and on someone else's mind", as well as the individual's "personal representations" of the experiences she or he has had (Patton, 2002, p. 341; Henning *et al.*, 2004, p. 52; Kelly, 2006). By exploring the participants' lived experiences, perceptions, feelings and actions, the researcher can secure information relevant to the theme of the study or the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews can be conducted in a structured or standardized format, a semi-structured format, or in an unstructured format (Henning *et al.*, 2004). For this investigation, I adopted the semi-structured format using open-ended questions, giving the adolescents the chance to discuss aspects that were important to them, while supplying me with information relevant to the themes identified in the pertinent literature (Merriam, 2009). I was therefore able to control the content of the discussion while at the same time leaving room to follow up contingent developments arising from the conversation, especially those which could enhance the 'richness' of the data obtained (Patton, 2002).

Four participants were available for the individual discussions and were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix G). One male and three females shared their individual and unique experiences of taking part in an EAL programme. The semi-structured format allowed me to respond freely and appropriately to their responses. Additionally, more probing questions were used to clarify information, as well as to obtain more detailed descriptions from the participants.

The researcher also made notes on observations of non-verbal behaviour during the interviews. Due to individual personality factors, one of the participants offered only limited verbal information, preferring to communicate her experience of the EAL programme predominantly through non-verbal means such as nodding or avoiding eye-contact. The interviews varied between twenty-one and forty-two minutes in duration and were recorded with permission of the participants using a digital voice recorder. These discussions were then transcribed verbatim.

3.5.4.3 Focus group interview

Kelly (2006) and Merriam (2009) hold that a focus group interview allows participants to express their experiences through social interaction. They are invited to share their understanding of a phenomenon while interacting with others who have shared a similar experience, encouraging them to 're-shape' their subjective perceptions (Kelly, 2006).

Here the researcher's attention is primarily focused on the interaction established between the participants and the dialogue which emerges from this interaction (Rule & John, 2011). From this, a variety of viewpoints around the same phenomenon can be obtained in a relatively short period of time (Patton, 2002; Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

Participants may sometimes feel vulnerable or exposed during a focus group interview and may therefore choose not to engage actively in it. Time should therefore be allotted to giving all the participants an equal opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Patton, 2002). Additionally, this qualitative data collection method can serve as a way of validating the information collected from the individual interviews, as well as enriching the data generated (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

One focus group session of thirty minutes was conducted for this study. The group consisted of four participants, one male and three females. I followed a semi-structured format, allowing me to guide the session as the participants engaged in spontaneous discussion with each other on their experiences. With their permission, their discussion was recorded using a digital voice

recorder, which was then verbatimly transcribed. See Appendix H. for an example of the focus group interview guide used for this study.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Babbie and Mouton (2010) and Merriam (2009) refer to the dynamic process of interpreting and making sense of data gathered as data analysis. Rule and John (2011) add that the researcher should "work the data to find patterns of meaning" at this stage of the investigation. According to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006b), this process should start during the data collection phase and continue until the researcher is able to generate explanations of the participants' thoughts and actions, in this study those relevant to the experience of an EAL programme, and finally to theorize about the case.

As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.7.3, multiple case study investigations call for two stages of data analysis. In the first stage, 'within-case' analyses are conducted, during which data collected from each participant's individual case study is analysed by the process of qualitative content analysis. This calls on the researcher to examine the content of the data texts for "themes or recurring patterns of meaning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 160; Henning *et al.*, 2004). This procedure is referred to as open-coding, with the researcher reading through each individual case several times, then dividing the data into smaller foci and assigning informal descriptions to those units which contain meaning (Rule & John, 2011).

Once open-coding is complete, the researcher groups together units which are similar in meaning and formally codes and categorizes the descriptions highlighted by the participants, comparing them with sources in the literature (Merriam, 1998). Such categorization allows the researcher to gain a global view of the research data (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Finally, the categories are interpreted and themes which emerged from the individual case studies are identified (Merriam, 2009). Refer to Appendices I and J for examples of the transcribed and coded interviews.

These individual cases are presented in the form of a word picture in which "thick descriptions" of each case are noted, while a thematic approach is applied to organizing and recording the research data (Rule & John, 2011, p. 118). Close attention is paid to the various elements present in each individual case and to how they are related to each other within a "bounded system" in the shaping of the participants' lived experiences (Rule & John, 2011, p. 118).

In the second stage, 'cross-case' analysis is used to build a general explanation which fits all the individual cases (Merriam, 2009). In this phase, the researcher repeats the process followed during the 'within-case' analysis, but applies these procedures across the individual cases. Both similar and different patterns and themes are identified in order to establish the central themes of the research. These units are grouped together, labelled and categorized. At the close of the analysis stage, the themes are presented in tabular format and discussed in comparison with the literature (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Finally, these themes are used to address the basic research questions of the investigation (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Merriam, 2009).

Throughout this study, the researcher made decisions about the methodology which would ensure that the data findings would be credible and dependable (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). A discussion on data verification as well as triangulation is given in the next section.

3.7 DATA VERIFICATION

To ensure the trustworthiness of the knowledge derived from research data, four concepts should be taken into account, those of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). A discussion on each concept, as well as the actions taken to ensure that good standards of practice were followed, is given below.

3.7.1 Credibility

According to Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 277), credibility refers to the degree of accuracy of the research data collected, in other words, do the data findings "ring true"? To increase the credibility of this investigation, I made use of triangulation, as described in section 3.5.4, along with member checking.

Patton (2002) reports that as similarities are noted across the results of the various research methods, the credibility of the findings increases. In this investigation, collages, semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group interview were used to obtain the participants' perceptions of their experiences in the same EAL programme. Taken together, these served as a basis for triangulation.

The researcher also completed member checks, asking the participants to review the data that had been collected as well as the interpretations that I had made of it (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). During the focus group interview, the researcher reflected on the data obtained in both the collages and the individual interviews, encouraging the participants to assess my interpretation

as well to provide additional information. The topics and questions asked during both interviews with the literature was then compared.

3.7.2 Dependability

As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.9, dependability refers to the reliability of a research study. According to Merriam (2009), it can be described as the degree to which the outcomes or findings of a research investigation would be similar were the study to be replicated or repeated using similar participants or the same environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

For this investigation, a detailed account of the research process is given, including data collection methods and data analysis procedures. This audit trail contained the dates as well as a description of the various actions taken to carry out the study (Patton, 2002). Refer to Appendix L for the audit trail summary. To confirm the dependability of the research, the documented evidence of the data collected, in the form of the collages and excerpts the transcribed individual and focus group interviews, was made available.

3.7.3 Transferability

According to Kelly (2006a) and Babbie and Mouton (2010), the contextual nature of qualitative research limits the generalizability of findings and the extent to which they can be transferred to other contexts or to other participants. The qualitative researcher is less concerned with the relevance of the data to other settings than with gaining an in-depth understanding of its relevance to a particular phenomenon in a specific setting (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). However, the strategies highlighted by Kelly (2006a) to make the findings as transferable as possible to other contexts were used; these were:

- A detailed description of the research context,
- The rationale for my selection of research methods, and
- A detailed description of the research process.

Furthermore, the sampling approach adopted in this study, namely purposive sampling, allowed participants both male and female from various ages (12-18) to be selected. Merriam (2009) states that diversity in a research sample may increase the transferability or replication of an investigation and was therefore relevant to this research.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Babbie and Mouton (2010) describe confirmability as the extent to which the outcomes of a research investigation reflect the content of the data obtained, and not the preconceived notions of the researcher. The researcher should always be aware of personal bias and actively work towards reducing the influence this may have on the findings of a study (Henning *et al.*, 2004). This can be done by continuous self-reflection, self-questioning, and ensuring that the final conclusions drawn are supported with a sound methodology (Kelly, 2006a; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Including direct quotes from the interviews with the participants can also allow a reader to draw independent inferences about the findings and to assess their soundness.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Merriam (2009), Babbie and Mouton (2010) argue that, while collecting data from research participants, the researcher should ensure that their human rights are respected. It is essential to establish trust with participants in order to ensure their active cooperation and increase the chance of meaningful conversations taking place (Kelly, 2006). This can be achieved by informing them of the aim of the research, their rights in taking part in it, and the ethical principles such as confidentiality to which the researcher will adhere.

By being sensitive to changes in both the research context and in the participants themselves, the researcher was able to extend the investigation, dealing appropriately to the diverse responses of the participants, both verbal and non-verbal. This included clarifying ambiguous answers, reflecting on the behaviour observed, and probing when more information was needed on a specific response. The researcher was thus able to "travel or wander with" with them on their journey, sharing their experiences of taking part in the EAL programme (Henning *et al.*, 2004, p. 70).

Ethical considerations are an essential component of any research investigation (Henning *et al.*, 2004). According to Babbie and Mouton (2010), a researcher should be thoroughly conversant with the conduct appropriate to a scientific investigation. Ethical issues may arise during interactions with other individuals and/or animals, and in environments where there is a conflict of interests (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Therefore care was taken, not to try to obtain information at the expense of the rights of any individual or animal during this project (Merriam, 2009).

By engaging in ethically sound practices throughout the research, the researcher safeguarded the well-being of the participants, protected them from any harm and promoted their mental health (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Further aspects of ethical practice included informed consent, confidentiality and its limits, voluntary participation, beneficence and non-maleficence, and honesty in the reporting of findings.

3.8.1 Informed consent

Before obtaining consent, the participants were informed about the nature of the study, the benefits and the potential risks involved, and explained that participation was voluntary (Smith, 2005). They were notified of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences, to withhold personal information, to remain anonymous, and to review the information they had given (Merriam, 2009). Written informed consent and process consent was secured from the intervention providers, the manager of the residential care institution, the custodians of the participants, as well as assent from individual participants themselves before embarking on the research journey (Merriam, 2009). See Appendices B, C, D, E and F for examples of the consent forms given to the above mentioned role-players.

3.8.2 Privacy and confidentiality

The researcher explained the nature and limits of confidentiality and the right to privacy and discussed these with each participant. In order to protect their identities, the participants chose pseudonyms to conceal their identities. Once the data was obtained, it was kept in a locked secure container (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore pseudonyms and codes for the participants both in transcribing and reporting the data were used.

3.8.3 Beneficence and non-maleficence

Throughout the investigation, care was taken to avoid any form of deception with the participants, giving them clear explanations and answers to questions they posed about taking part in the research (Christians, 2005). The researcher promoted the ethical principle of beneficence by putting the rights and well-being of the participants, the horses, and all the other stakeholders foremost when making decisions (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, the services of a psychologist were available during the project to address any possible psychological or emotional issues which might arise. Fortunately, in the event these services were not needed.

To ensure non-maleficence and to make sure that no harm (physical, social, emotional or cognitive) came to the participants, the researcher took care that her own actions, words and interactions were ethically planned and executed (Merriam, 2009). The welfare of the horses was similarly protected throughout the investigation. The participants were required to treat the animals with respect and to follow the guidance of the equine specialist in their interaction with them in the arena (EAGALA, 2009a).

Additionally, I, as the researcher, ensured that I was properly trained and competent to conduct the investigation. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2005), the researcher has an ethical duty and responsibility to ensure that she or he is knowledgeable, capable and adequately skilled to undertake an investigation. As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.10, the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical and professional guidelines as specified by the Department of Educational Psychology at the relevant university.

3.8.4 Analysis and the reporting of findings

By adhering rigorously to the chosen research methods during data collection and analysis and taking into account the above ethical considerations, Information gathered which was accurate, scientifically sound, and appropriate for a qualitative investigation (Henning *et al.*, 2004). The limitations of the study were communicated and possible personal bias was recorded in carrying out the project. This will be discussed further in Chapter five of this document.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the qualitative research design used was discussed, including a discussion on the purpose of the study, the research paradigm and the methodology. This was followed by the research setting, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures. Attention was also given to aspects relating to credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability and triangulation, while the ethical considerations applied throughout the study were covered in the final section.

In the following chapter, the findings of the research are presented, along with a discussion of the process of analysis. The themes which emerged from the data will be put forward in a tabular format and briefly discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This research investigation aimed to explore the experiences of adolescents in residential care as they participated in an EAL intervention programme. The methodology comprised multiple case research using collages, individual interviews, and a focus group interview (see Chapter three, Section 3.5). In this chapter, the findings are presented and discussed according to the main themes which emerged from the research data.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

From the qualitative content analysis of the research data obtained from the collages, individual interviews and the focus group interview, only the most significant categories and themes, both within and across all the individual cases, will be discussed. Table 4.1 gives a summary of the key findings.

Table 4.1: Research findings: Themes and categories

Themes	Categories
1. Conceptualization of experience of an EAL programme.	❖ Overall thoughts, feelings and attitudes of the programme
2. Relationships	❖ Trust ❖ Attachment ❖ Communication
3. Personal well-being	❖ Emotional welfare ❖ Psychological welfare ❖ Social competence
4. Learning and development (mastery)	❖ Knowledge ❖ Life skills ❖ Future possibilities

The themes which emerged from the findings were evident in the participants' voiced responses to their experiences of the EAL programme. It should be borne in mind that their experiences may have been influenced by biological and contextual factors, as described in Chapter two. Reference is therefore made to the research context as well as biographical information which precede the discussion of the research findings.

4.2.1 Research context and biographical information of the participants

Chapter one, Section 1.7 noted that the research was carried out at a non-profit organization (care institution) which provided services to at-risk adolescents and street adolescents at a Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) and a Drop-In Centre. The CYCC gave full-time care, while the Drop-In Centre gave part-time care. Five adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18, who were receiving care at this organization, were purposively selected to take part in the research. They had taken to life on the street due to several factors, including poverty, neglect, abuse, and domestic violence.

The research data was gathered at the residential establishment, using a projective technique (collage), semi-structured individual interviews, and a focus group interview. The anonymity and privacy of the participants were protected by asking them to choose pseudonyms to replace their real names. In addition, any information which might have compromised their identities or any details which they themselves could not verbally provide or confirm, but which were noted non-verbally, were enclosed in square brackets, for example, nodding the head up and down or shaking it left and right. The biographical information of the participants is given in tabular form in Table 4.2 on the following page.

Table 4.2: Biographical details of the participants

Research Participant Code	Gender	Age	Grade	Ethnicity	Home Language	Residential care	Previous experience with horses	Data Collection Techniques		
								Collage	Individual interview	Focus group
P1	Female	14	7	Coloured	Afrikaans	CYCC	Yes	√	√	√
P2	Male	15	6	Coloured	Afrikaans	CYCC	No	√	√	√
P3	Female	13	6	Coloured	Afrikaans	Drop-In Centre	No	√	√	√
P4	Female	12	1	Coloured	Afrikaans	Drop-In Centre	No	√	√	√
P5	Female	13	6	Coloured	Afrikaans	Drop-In Centre	No	√	X	X

4.3 PRESENTATION OF WITHIN-CASE FINDINGS

Those aspects which emerged most frequently during the analysis of the participants' comments, in both the individual and group interviews, were coded accordingly. The following is a presentation of the findings from the individual cases in a descriptive narrative. The identified themes from these cases are summarized at the end of the narrative descriptions.

The reader should bear in mind that, due to the nature of the participants' backgrounds, limitations of expressive language and sentence construction were recorded in their direct responses. Data was recorded in the participants' first language, Afrikaans. For the data presentation and discussion, however, the verbatim responses were translated into English.

4.3.1 Participant 1 (P1)

Pseudonym chosen by the participant: *Kim*

Kim was a spontaneous, self-confident and talkative individual who had been in foster care since 2002. Her mother and father had been unemployed since her birth and were living on the street, but their exact whereabouts was unknown. She had also been exposed to severe trauma

including domestic violence while under her parent's care. Since 2002, she had been placed in the care of her mother's sister by the Department of Social Services. While in foster care, she had had contact with her grandfather, who worked with racehorses, and had often helped him to take care of the animals.

In February 2013, because of behavioural issues, including alcohol abuse, drugs, and theft, Kim was referred to the CYCC by her aunt. At the CYCC, her behaviour and interaction with peers were described as domineering and defiant. She had difficulties with reading and writing. According to the residential social worker, these developmental delays could be traced back to limited exposure to a language-rich environment while staying with her mother and father. She was staying at the CYCC for a period of 6 months, after which she was to be placed back in foster care, depending on the outcome of pending court cases. She described her stay at the CYCC as boring, and often ran away to visit her aunt.

Kim openly shared her excitement and feelings when she heard about the EAL programme:

"Ek het lekker gevoel ... excited ja ..." ["I felt good ... excited yes"].

She gave the impression of being confident around horses, as she has previously engaged with these creatures. She admitted that she had felt fearful when she first made contact with the horses, but soon became used to them.

"Ek was bang, ek het nie lekker gevoel om daantoe gaan toe gaan en toe vat ek die perd maar toe sit ek 'n tou om hom toe vat ek daardie perd 'n bietjie rond [...] nou is ek gewoond aan twee perde ... dit was lekker ..." ["I was afraid, I did not feel happy to go there, and then I took the horse and put a rope around him, then I took the horse around a bit ... now I am used to two horses ... it was enjoyable ..."].

She seemed to have formed a bond with a horse named Tessa. She referred to the animal as her horse and mentioned that Tessa recognized her when she called her:

"My bruin perd ... Tessa [perd se naam] [...] Jy skree net Tessa dan weet sy dis ekke en dan kom sy na my toe" ["My brown horse ... Tessa ... You just call Tessa, then she knows it's me and then she comes to me"] (P1).

She revealed that she felt empowered and understood as the horse did what she expected of her:

"Want die perd luister vir my sy doen wat ek vra ..." ["because the horse listens to me she does what I ask ..."].

Kim also felt concerned about the horse's well-being and the way some of the other adolescents interacted with the animal. Her compassion for Tessa was evident in the words she used:

"Die een [deelnemer] hard druk so en dan gaan die perd sommerso so op in die lug in ... hy wil nie hê hulle moet daar peuter nie ... dis seer ... nou wil die perd nie kom nie" ["One [participant] presses hard like this and then the horse goes up in the air ... she doesn't want them to tamper there ... it's painful ... now the horse doesn't want to come"].

During the programme, Kim shared her knowledge of horses with the rest of the adolescents and guided them accordingly:

"Toe sê ek nee julle ken nie van perde nie ... ek weet van perde. Hul skop net as jy verkeerd maak" ["Then I said no, you don't know about horses ... I know about horses. They only kick if you do something wrong"].

She seemed proud of her ability to guide the others during the programme. She mentioned feeling pleased when she successfully completed an activity with her horse and received positive feedback from the therapists:

"Ek het met my perd oorgegaan [oor die hindernis] ... dit was lekker gewees ... toe sê sy good Kim [skuilnaam] good en toe sê ek thank you ..." ["I went over [the obstacle] with my horse ... that was nice ... then she said, good, Kim [pseudonym], and then I said thank you"].

She did, however, not enjoy the group activities, as she felt that horses only listened to one person at a time:

"Dit was nie lekker, ek wou nie saam met hulle gewerk het nie ... die perd luister nie vir almal nie ... die perd gaan net vir een luister" ["It was not enjoyable, I didn't want to work with them ... the horse doesn't listen to everyone ... the horse will only listen to one"].

Despite this, she found joy in sharing her experiences of the programme with the support staff at the CYCC:

"Ek het vir antie Maria [skuilnaam] vertel hoe was dit en antie Nadia [skuilnaam] het my gevra die aand toe ons sit hier op die mat toe vra sy hoe was dit, toe sê ek dit was baie lekker gewees, ek het geleer en ek het vir hulle gesê hoe moet jy wees met die perd en so ..." ["I told auntie Maria [pseudonym] how it was and auntie Nadia [pseudonym] asked me the evening when we were sitting on the carpet here then she asked me how it was, then I said it was very nice, I learnt and I told them how you must be with the horse and so on ..."].

Kim spoke of the horses as her friends and said that she longed to see them again. She was due to leave the CYCC in August 2013, depending on the outcome of the pending court cases:

"Nou gaan ons seker nooit die perde weer sien nie ... ek mis almal die perde [...] maar ek gaan kom visit as ek nou voel om te kom, dan sal ek kom kyk of hulle [perde] nog hier is, my vriende en so sal ek kom nou ..." ["Now we're probably never going to see the horses again ... I miss all the horses [...] but I will come visit when I feel like it, then I will see whether they [the horses] are still here, my friends and so on, I will come ..."]

She also imagined how the memories of her experience could help her in the future:

"Miskien gaan jy perde sien daar waar jy ookal gaan ... daars miskien in daardie plek ook waar jy gaan jy ook sien perde en dan dink jy terug wat jy gedoen het aan die perd en so ..." ["Maybe you will see horses there wherever you go ... maybe there in that place where you go, you will also see horses, and then you think back what you did to the horse and so on ..."].

Although Kim had previously worked with horses, she said that she would want to apply the new knowledge she had obtained during the programme:

"Ek het geleer, uhm, ek wil eendag, uhm, my perd leer om te hardloop so om my sonder tou ..." ["I learnt, uhm, one day I want to, uhm, train my horse to run around me without a rope ..."].

She also became aware of her personal behaviour and how an individual horse might respond to her:

"... toe loop ek mos die heelyd so met die perd maar ek het nie gesien daardie perd gaan skop nie toe loop ek die heelyd en hulle staan nou daardie kant toe [sy wys na die agterkant van perd op die prent] toe het die perd amper amper geskop maar hy like

miskien nie dat ek moet die heelyd so om hom loop nie" ["... then I walked the whole time like this with the horse, but I didn't see this horse was going to kick, then I walked the whole time and they stood to that side [she indicates the horse's back on the picture] then the horse almost kicked, but he maybe didn't like that I walked around him the whole time"].

She explained what she would act differently to avoid such a response in the future:

"... dalk net 'n bietjie meer te kyk eers kyk of die perd eers te leer ken en dan te doen ..."
["... maybe just look a little first or get to know the horse and then to do ..."].

Kim summed up her overall experience of the programme as enjoyable and expressed a desire to take part in such a programme again:

"Ek het alles geniet ... en dis lekker as ons da is. Ek sal dit weer wil doen en kom kyk na die perd" ["I enjoyed everything ... and it's nice when we're there. I would like to do it again and come and see the horse"].

Themes which emerged from Kim's case included strengthening the relationship as she bonded with the horse. This was revealed in the ways she related to and identified with the horse, as well as how trust evolved between them. Her well-being was reinforced by the sense of empowerment she felt as the horse listened and responded to her. Her self-esteem was increased as she became used to working the horse and successfully completing their activities. She showed mindfulness of the horse's need to be respected and treated appropriately.

She seemed proud to be able to share her existing knowledge of horses with the other participants, as well as sharing her experiences of the EAL programme with support staff from the CYCC. Her social skills were challenged, as she did not enjoy working in a group, but she nevertheless seemed to contribute effectively to ensuring a positive outcome for the whole group. She developed an awareness of her own actions and the way her environment responded to the way she communicated. She articulated how she would apply the new knowledge she had obtained in her interaction with horses in the future. Her overall experience of the programme was one of enjoyment, with the hope of having a similar experience in the future.

4.3.2 Participant 2 (P2)

Pseudonym chosen by the participant: *Superboy*

A reserved, well-mannered and honest young man, Superboy has been utilizing the services of the Drop-In Centre since the beginning of 2012. He was placed in the CYCC at the end of 2012, after the Department of Social Services removed him from his parents' care on the grounds of neglect. Both parents were unemployed. He did not attend school during 2012, as he had to help support his family and so remained in Grade 6 for another year. As the CYCC only provides temporary care (six months) for adolescents, in July 2013 he was referred to another CYCC, one which catered specifically for males and focused on developing craft skills. Superboy will also attend a School of Skills close to the CCYC. Becoming a minister or a professional soccer-player were two of his considered possible life goals.

Superboy shared his delight in interacting with the horses during the programme:

"Dit was net 'n groot ervaring ... dis baie lekker om saam met perde te werk" ["It was just a big experience ... it's very enjoyable to work with horses"].

He described in detail his interactions with the horses, as well as how the horses responded to and trusted him:

"Hy stap saam toe loop ek healtyd op en af saam met hom sonder tou ... en wanneer hulle [terapeute] vir ons roep en dan as ons vir die perde los dan kom hulle sommer agter ons aan van self ..." ["He walks with then I walked the whole time up and down with him without a rope ... and when they [therapists] call us and then when we let go of the horses, then they just come along with us on their own ..."].

Superboy described how he and the horse communicated and understood each other:

"En toe sê ek vir hom [perd] 'kom kom'... en die perd, ek het healtyd saam met hom gepraat ook ..." ["And then I said to him [the horse] 'come come' ... and the horse I also talked to it the whole time ..."].

He seemed proud of the name he had given his horse,

"Ek het hom 'n naam gegee ... Stukkels [perd se naam] het ek hom genoem ..." ["I gave him a name ... Stukkels [horse's name] I called him ..."],

and said that he had become fond of the horse as they worked together in the various activities:

"En toe het ek ook saam met hom gewerk en so het hy ook vir my lief geraak" ["And then I also worked with him and so he started to love me."].

He added that the horses were keen on interacting with him and likewise accepted him:

"Ek het vir perde gevryf al en hul [perde] vir my dan aanvaar ... so hulle almal het van my gehou en dit was net lekker ..." ["I have rubbed the horses and they [the horses] then accepted me ... so they all liked me and it was just nice ..."].

As this was his first encounter with horses, Superboy described how his knowledge had been extended and how his initial perceptions about the horses' behaviour had changed during the programme:

"Ek het altyd gedink perde loop net op gras en hulle slaap nie in hokke ... maar dis nie so nie ..." ["I always thought horses only walk on grass and they don't sleep in sheds ... but that isn't so ..."].

He was fearful of the animals at first, but became more confident as the sessions evolved:

"... eers toe was ek mos so bang vir hom [perd] gewees en almal [deelnemers] was so bang gewees maar na die tyd dat hulle ons die aktiwiteit klaar gedoen het toe aanvaar ek nou dat 'n mens hoef nie bang te wees nie ..." ["... at first I was so afraid of him [the horse] and everyone [participants] was so afraid, but afterwards when they finished doing the activity with us then I accepted that you don't need to be afraid ..."].

Superboy gave the impression of having empathy towards the horses, explaining that they should be treated with respect and approached in a gentle way:

"Hulle [deelnemers] moenie so hard is met die perd wees nie want die perd is ook so ... hy raak ook 'n bietjie bang ..." ["They [the participants] mustn't be so hard with the horse, because the horse is also like ... he also becomes a bit scared ..."].

He found activities which required teamwork during the programme to be challenging. He preferred to work with the horses on his own, feeling that the other participants did not want to cooperate:

"Ek en die meisies moet ons moet nou in 'n groep werk en dan moet ons die perde een perd vat en hom om te draai toe met die toue en vir hom lei ... toe was hulle bang. Hulle wil nie saamgewerk het nie die meisies" ["The girls and me had to now work in a group and then we had to take the horses one horse and turn him around with the ropes and lead him ... then they were scared. They didn't want to cooperate, the girls"].

He showed leadership as he guided the other participants through the activity, ensuring a positive outcome:

"Toe sê ek vir hulle ... kom julle moet saam werk. Toe het ons eers aan hom [perd] gevrywe en ek het toe aan hom gevrywe en so het ek gesê "kom kom" en ek weet ook nie as ek praat saam met hom dan luister perde en toe het so geloop, stadig geloop, en toe het ons ook agterna geloop en dit was net lekker" ["Then I said to them ... come on, you must work together. Then we first rubbed him and then I rubbed him and so I said, 'Come come', and I don't know but when I talk with him, then the horse listens and then we walked like this, walked slowly, and then we also walked behind, and it was just nice"].

He was pleased at their efforts and the acknowledgement they received from the therapists: "... toe klap hulle hande vir ons want ons het ook saamgewerk en so-aan" ["... then they clapped their hands for us because we also worked together and so on"].

Superboy seemed to have developed respect and regard for the horses, reflected in several of the observations he made during the sessions:

"Perd is ook soos ons [mense] hy is ook so partykeers raak hy bang maar hy wil ook liefde hê en so ... hulle is so swaar en sterk perde en hulle is baie sterk en elkeen het sy bene en dan voel ek so sy bene en dis net sterk ..." ["Horses are also like us [humans], he is also like that, so sometimes he gets scared, but he also wants love and so on ... they are so heavy and strong, horses, and they are very strong and each one has his legs and then I feel his legs and it's just strong ..."].

He shared his feelings about the appropriate ways in which to interact with horses:

"n Mens moenie te hard wees nie en te hardloop na die perd toe nie, jy hardloop na die perd toe dan gaan die perd weg hardloop ... jy moet saggies na hom toe kom en dan gaat hy nie bang wees nie en dan moet jy aan hom vryf en so-aan, maar nou weet ek ook hoe

om na die perd toe aan te raak want die perde hulle raak ook bang en dan hardloop hulle en so-aan ..." ["You shouldn't be too hard and run towards the horse, you run to the horse, then the horse will run away ... you have to go to it quietly and then he won't be scared and then you have to rub him and so on, but now I also know how to touch the horse, because the horses they also get scared and then they run and so on ..."].

Superboy shared his experiences with one of the male support and youth care workers at the CYCC:

"Ek het die outjie wat daarso by ons werk in die aande ek het vir hom vertel dat toe perde hulle sterk en groot hulle is rereg groot en hulle hardloop ook vinnig en toe sê ek vir hom perde is rereg goed" ["I told the guy who works there with us in the evenings, I told him that the horses are strong and big, they are really big and they also run fast, and then I said to him, horses are really good"].

In addition, he mentioned that he had recurring dreams about the horses after the programme was completed:

"Ek het ook-al gedroom dat ek het ook perde en my een perd ... hy loop altyd saam met my sonder toue dan loop heeltyd saam met my en as ek sê "kom" dan hoor vir my en dan hardloop "eee" dan stop so hy altyd loop en dan kom hy en dit was baie lekker hoe hy gekom het ..." ["I've also dreamt that I also have horses and my one horse ... he always walks with me without bridle, then he walks with me the whole time and when I say 'come' then he hears me and then he runs 'eee', then he stops so and walks and then he comes and it was very nice when he came ..."].

In addition, references to future goals were noted by Superboy:

"Net om 'n goeie mens en sukses te word en net altyd vir ander mense te deel en goed ... ek elke dag mens het dankbaar is, is baie lekker ... daarom ek het ook 'n klomp dinge in my kop na die program. Ek wil net 'n goeie werk hê ook saam werk doen, ek het nie geweet dat ek gaan eendag saam met perde vryf of so want ek het nog nooit nie en dus ook net die Here goed vir my, die Here is so goed en daarso om nog perde toe te gaan dit is baie lekker. En ek het 'n klomp drome tannie, ek wil ook gepass [skool graad slaag] te word en rereg die Here se wil ook deel hoe goed die Here is vir elk van ons. Die Here het alles gemaak en hy het die perde ook gemaak en dit is net hoe goed die Here is en die Here het vir hulle ook sterk gemaak en so is ons ook sterk om te staan en te loop en die

Here se naam te verkondig en ek wil ook rerig groot sukses van my lewe maak" ["Just to be a good person and be a success and just to share with other people and such ... to be thankful every day is very nice ... that's why I also have a lot of things in my head after the programme. I just want to have a good job and also work together, I didn't know that I will one day rub horses or so on because I have never and thus God is just good to me, God is so good and there to go to the horses it is very nice. And I have a lot of dreams, I also want to pass [school grade] and really share in God's will, how good God is for everyone of us. God made everything and he also made the horses and that is just how good God is and God also made them strong and so we are also strong to stand and to walk and to proclaim God's name and I also really want to make a big success of my life"].

Although Superboy found it difficult to formulate words to express his overall response to the programme, it was clear that he found the experience pleasurable and that he had become fond of the horses:

"Ja, ek weet nie hoe om te sê nie maar dit was net goed hoe om saam perde en hulle is net hulle is baie lekker ... ek hou van perde ... van as ek sal weer so 'n kans kry ... ek sal weer gaan. Ek het ook 'n klomp goed ervaar en ek is ook baie lief vir perde geword ..." ["Yes, I don't know how to say it, but it was just good to be with the horses, and they are they are just nice ... I like horses ... if I get a chance like this again ... I will go again. I also experienced a lot of things, and I also grew to love the horses ..."].

From this case study, the themes which were noted included a developing relationship as Superboy experienced a sense of trust as the horses followed him without being led by a rope. He engaged in meaningful communication with the horse both verbally and with non-verbal gestures (stroking the horse). Attachment was demonstrated through his identification with a horse which he referred to as 'my horse'.

His ability to show awareness and empathy towards the horse's feelings, as well being more confident in his interaction with the horse as the sessions progressed, strengthened his emotional competence. He felt a sense of accomplishment and success as the therapists acknowledged their efforts in group work activities. Through this they provided guidance and motivational support to the other participants. The increase in both social and psychological wellness was evident in the spontaneous conversations Superboy had with various other individuals about his experience of the intervention programme.

This fostered new knowledge about the nature of horses and how human and equine behaviour were similar in certain ways. Appropriate interaction with horses was highlighted as an essential skill, one which could be transferred to other human relationships. Exploring this new information on horses encouraged Superboy to reflect on future dreams and motivated him to set educational and personal goals. He admitted to feeling overwhelmed by all the positive things which had happened to him during the EAL programme, and was at a loss to describe his deeper understanding of the experience.

4.3.3 Participant 3 (P3)

Pseudonym chosen by the participant: *Jaydene*

Jaydene was a friendly young girl who was open to new experiences and demonstrated a curiosity about life. She started visiting the Drop-In Centre in 2011. She was currently staying with her parents and sister. According to the social worker, the family often struggled with finances as they were from a low socio-economic background. She visited the Drop-In Centre each day of the week except Sundays. She was fond of the recreational and musical activities which were provided for all the adolescents at both the CYCC and the Drop-In Centre. She attended a local school close to the Drop-In Centre.

Jaydene said that taking part in the EAL programme offered her a variety of new experiences:

"Ek was verbaas ... toe sê ek vir myself dit is nou die eerste keer nou dat ek 'n perd sien en naby 'n perd staan ... so sê ek aanmekaar vir myself ..." ["I was surprised ... then I said to myself, this is now the first time now that I see a horse and stand close to a horse ... so I kept on saying to myself ..."].

Connection and rapport were established when she gave the horse a name:

"Die ene was ons perd, die ene was Sandy [perd se naam] ..." ["This one was our horse, this one was Sandy [horse's name] ..."] and when she interacted with the horse in various activities: "... gee die perd kos en water, dan was ek die perd en dan borsel ek die perd ... dit was baie lekker" ["... give the horse food and water, then I wash the horse and then I brush the horse ... it was very nice"].

At the beginning of the programme, Jaydene said that she had felt afraid:

"Want die eerste dag toe ek daar gekom het toe was ek baie bang ... die tweede dag wat ons daantoe gegaan het was ek nie meer bang vir 'n perd ... ek het die perd leer ken."
["Because the first day when I came there, I was very scared ... the second day we went there I was not scared of a horse any more, I got to know the horse"].

She said that you should be aware of your personal feelings, as they might have an influence on others:

"Jy moet nie wys vir die perd jy's bang vir hom nie anders is die perd ook bang vir jou ..."
["You should not show the horse that you're scared of him, otherwise the horse is also scared of you ..."].

Jaydene likewise admitted that she had had mixed feelings about how the other participants interacted both with each other and with the horses:

"Was so lekker ... bly ek heeltyd vir Nicole [skuilnaam vir deelnemer] sê I love my horses very much ... en soms dan bly ons [deelnemers] partykeer so stry"
["It was so nice ... I kept on saying to Nicole [participant's pseudonym] I love my horses very much ... and sometimes then we [participants] kept on arguing"].

She also described how she managed to reduce the arguing between the participants:

"Miskien hulle twee stry ... dan sê ek sommer ... nou gaan ek die perd vat en dan vat sy die perd"
["Maybe the two of them argue ... then I just say ... now I'm going to take the horse, and then she takes the horse"].

Jaydene shared various other problems she had to solve while interacting with the horses:

"Ons moes iets bou ... daar was sulke pale ... dan moet ons die goed so aanmekaar gesit het dan moet ons met die perd daaroor geloop het en dan was daar daardie paaltjies so een vir een pak en dan moet ons met die perd so daar omgeloop het ..."
["We had to build something ... there were these poles ... then we had to put these things together, then we had to walk across it with the horse, and then there were these small poles stacked one by one, and then we had to walk round it with the horse ..."].

She commented on the group work activities and the challenges that emerged for her personally:

"Ek wil partykeers alleen werk want 'n mens raak moeg as almal moet saamwerk ..."
["Sometimes I want to work alone, because you get tired when everybody has to work together ..."].

Jaydene highlighted the acknowledgement that followed once the problems of working together in a group had been solved and success had been achieved:

"Toe gaan die perd oor toe wen ekke ..., ekke, Hillary en Kim ... en toe sê sy [terapeut]
... ja ons het dit reg gedoen ..." ["Then the horse went over and I won ... I, Hillary and
Kim ... and then she [therapist] said ... yes, we did it right ..."].

Apart from the interaction with the horses and her co-participants, she enjoyed talking to the therapists and sharing her personal experiences with them:

"Hulle [terapeute] was ook baie lekker. Hulle het ook saamgespeel en al die aktiwiteite
gedoen, hulle het nie net daar gestaan nie, hulle loop saam met ons en so en ons het ook
baie lekker gesels ..." ["They [therapists] were also very nice. They also played with us
and did the activities, they didn't just stand there, they walk with us and so on, and we
also made nice conversation ..."].

Besides the relationship she formed with the therapists, Jaydene expressed a fondness for the horses and described how this bond was fostered through touch:

"Dan gee ek die perde so 'n drukkie, so 'n stywe drukkie ... toe sê ek vir myself hierdie
perd is baie lief vir my" ["Then I give the horses a hug, such a tight hug ... then I said to
myself, this horse loves me very much"].

She described her mindfulness of the horses' feelings and explained the approach people should take when engaging with them:

"'n Mens moet nie onbeskof en hard met die perde wees nie en mens moet nie die perde
so hard kam of borsel nie of so seer maak want die perd wil nie daarvan hou nie ..."
["You must not be rude and rough with the horses, and you mustn't comb or brush them
so rough or hurt them, because the horse will not like it ..."].

She revealed her wishes to see the horses again:

"Ek mis maar eintlik die perde ding [program] wat ons gedoen het. In die aande lê ek so wakker ... ek dink, ek kan nie so slaap nie ... want ek mis hulle [perde] baie ..." ["I actually miss the horse thing [programme] that we did. At night, I lie awake ... I think, I can't sleep ... because I miss them [the horses] a lot ..."].

Contact with the horses brought about inner developments, which included nightly dreams:

"Ek het daarvoor gedroom hoe werk mens met 'n perd ... en in my drome ek leer die kinders hoe werk met 'n perd so en dit was baie lekker ..." ["I dreamt how you work with a horse ... and in my dreams I taught adolescents how to work with a horse, and it was so nice ..."].

She became increasingly aware of events happening around her and made some observations about the horse's appearance:

"Ek het nie geweet 'n perd se maag is so groot nie ... verwag die perd want dit is 'n meisie?" ["I didn't know that a horse's tummy is so big ... is the horse pregnant because it's a girl?"].

This stimulated her curiosity and an intuitive appetite for new discoveries. Jaydene highlighted an increase in her confidence through the interactive experiences:

"Ek het nog nie met perde gewerk nie, ek het nooit geweet nie ... en nou weet ek ..." ["I haven't worked with horses, I never knew ... and now I know ..."].

The way she conceptualized her experience suggests that Jaydene had a positive reaction to the EAL programme and that she thoroughly enjoyed it:

"Daar anderkant was dit baie lekker ... alles was lekker, net daardie perd wat so onbeskof gewees het toe ons so vinnig na hom toe gegaan het... hy dit seker nie gelike nie ... ek het uitgesien daarvoor" [deelname aan die program] ["Over there it was very nice ... everything was nice, just that horse that was so angry when we went up to it so quickly ... he probably didn't like it ... I looked forward to it [participation in the programme]"].

She added that the programme had had a positive influence on her life and that she would like a second opportunity to take part in such a programme:

"Dit [programme] het my lewe baie beter gemaak...ek sal baie bly wees as ek nog 'n kans kry ..." ["This [the programme] made my life better ... I will be very glad if I get another chance ..."].

The themes which emerged in Jaydene's case related to her care in developing a bond or relationship with a horse. She seemed to find great delight in showing physical affection, nurturing or grooming the horses during the sessions. During a conversation with another participant, she voiced her affection for and attachment to the horses, saying, "I love my horses very much."

Her concern for the well-being of the horses mirrored an increasing awareness of her own emotional competence and the development of compassion. As the sessions progressed, she became more confident of her ability to interact with the horses. Working in a group seemed challenging for her, yet achieving a successful outcome reinforced her value as a team player and increased both her social skills and her internal motivation. She shared her sense of achievement with the therapist, which in turn reinforced her communication skills.

Her vigilant nature and observational skills enhanced her knowledge of horses, which in turn extended her cognitive frame of reference. Although this was her first encounter with horses, she was able to practice essential life skills such as problem-solving during the sessions. Her overall experience was thus seen as constructive and meaningful.

4.3.4 Participant 4 (P4)

Pseudonym chosen by the participant: *Nicole*

Nicole presented as a reserved yet compliant person who preferred to communicate using non-verbal gestures. She was described by the support staff at the CYCC as shy and rarely spoke to any individual apart from a close friend. She was in foster care at the time and was living with her grandmother, brother, and cousins. Her parents were unemployed and living on the street. Nicole had limited contact with her biological parents, but her grandmother did visit the CYCC often to discuss Nicole's involvement in the support programmes with the residential support staff.

The residential worker had no information on Nicole's early development, but understood that her mother had been drinking while she was expecting the baby. Nicole began visiting the Drop-In Centre in 2011 and attended two to three days a week. The Department of Social Services was busy with an investigation on the grounds of abuse and was considering placing her in residential care. Nicole also attended a local special needs school. She enjoyed the educational activities offered at the centre.

She spoke softly and was often difficult to understand. However, she indicated that she was pleased to take part in the EAL programme and that the presence of the horses made her feel content:

"Die perde ... maak my happy so ..." ["The horses ... make me happy so ..."]. She shared of her experiences of grooming and taking care of the horses: "Ek het sy [perd] bene gevryf en geborsel [...] gee vir hulle kos, ons gee vir hulle water ..." ["I rubbed and brushed his [the horse's] legs ... gave them food, we gave them water ..."].

A bond between Nicole and the horses had clearly been established, as she pointed out that the horses gave their cooperation and that they became better acquainted with each other:

"Hulle [perde] het gou geluister [...] hy [perd] het my leer ken en ek vir hom [...] ek was baie lief vir hom [perd] ["They [the horses] listened quickly ... he [the horse] got to know me, and I got to know him ... I loved him [the horse] very much"].

This was her first encounter with horses, and she mentioned the novelty of the experiences she shared during the programme:

"Ek het gehardloop met hulle [perde] vir eerste keer ..." ["I ran with them [the horses] for the first time ..."].

She recalled that she had felt afraid at the beginning of the programme, but as it continued she became more confident:

"Ek was nie meer bang nie ... ek het die perd aanhou vryf" ["I wasn't scared any more ... I kept on stroking the horse"].

This statement was echoed by Jaydene's response during the focus group interview:

"Die tweede dag was Nicole ook bang. Toe sê ek vir haar jy moenie bang wees nie, ek was ook so en toe sê sy ok, toe vat sy die borsel toe begin sy die perd te borsel" ["The second day Nicole was also scared. Then I said to her, you mustn't be afraid. I was also like that, and then she said OK, then she took the brush and then she started to brush the horse"].

After the intervention, Nicole shared her experience with her grandmother:

"... ek het vir ouma gesê ons loop met die perde, ons speel met hulle ..." ["I told granny that we walk with the horses, we play with them ..."].

The residential social worker mentioned that Nicole also discussed her response to the EAL programme with the educators of the school she was currently attending. Through non-verbal behaviour (shaking her head up and down), she confirmed that she wanted to see the horses again and to participate in future EAL programmes. Her general response to the programme was positive and gratifying:

"Dit was lekker" ["It was nice"].

The themes which emerged from Nicole's case reinforced the notion that meaningful relations were possible between soft-spoken individuals and horses; indeed, non-verbal behaviour forms an essential aspect of human-horse relationships. In this case, the process of forming an attachment or connection helped to empower the participant, as once the horses had responded to her non-verbal cues, Nicole voiced her affection for the animals verbally. However, her communication with them continued predominately through non-verbal gestures, such as stroking or grooming, through which trust evolved. As the programme progressed, she overcame her fear of the horses and engaged more confidently with them.

Her participation in the programme motivated Nicole to share her experience with her grandmother, as well as with educators at school, which strengthened both her social and interpersonal skills. Her overall experience of the programme was positive, and she indicated a willingness to participate in future EAL programmes.

4.3.5 Participant 5 (P5)

Pseudonym chosen by the participant: *Hilary*

Hilary presented as a compassionate, helpful and independent young girl. She was living at the time with her sister and brother in foster care. They had been placed in the care of her aunt after their mother died in 2010. The social worker mentioned a history of sexual abuse and noted that her aunt described Hilary's behaviour as challenging. Her school attendance was irregular and she experienced great difficulty in her school work. The family faced financial challenges, so they were unable to provide for her physical needs. Hilary started visiting the Drop-In Centre in 2012, where she enjoyed taking part in the educational and recreational activities that were offered in the centre.

Hilary did not visit the residential care institution on the day when the individual and focus group interviews were carried out. As a result, only information from her collage was included in the discussion on the research findings. She had formed a bond with the horses during the EAL programme, so the emerging themes highlighted aspects such as her affection for the animals and her longing to see them again.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF CROSS-CASE FINDINGS

A summary of the themes and categories as presented in Table 4.2 will serve as a framework for the discussion.

The adolescents' conceptualization of their experiences was a complex phenomenon, and a significant degree of overlap was found between some of the categories within the themes presented; these will be noted throughout the discussion.

4.4.1 Conceptualization of the experience of participating in an EAL programme

All the participants indicated through either verbal or written means that they had had a positive experience and that they would consider taking part a similar programme should the opportunity arise again. Given the barriers which AIRC face with their language and cognitive skills, their descriptions were not fully comprehensive. With a limited vocabulary, they found it challenging to articulate their experiences. As a result, they tended to use one expression to describe a variety of experiences, including their thoughts, feelings and attitudes to the EAL programme:

"Dit was lekker ..." ["It was nice/enjoyable ..."] (Nicole).

"Ja, ek weet nie hoe om te sê nie maar dit was net goed hoe om saam perde en hulle is net hulle is baie lekker, ek hou van perde ... van as ek sal weer so 'n kans kry, ek sal weer gaan ek het ook 'n klomp goed ervaar en ek is ook baie lief vir perde geword ..."
["Yes, I don't know how to say, but it was just good how to be with horses, and they are just very nice, I like horses ... if I get another chance like this, I will go again. I also experienced a lot of things and I also grew fond of horses ..."] (Superboy).

To complement the information on the participants' experiences, I will present noted research findings covering those aspects of trust, attachment and communication which characterize the relationships between people and horses.

4.4.2 Relationships

According to the Commission for Adolescents and Young People and Child Guardian (2012), relationships are central to recovery from trauma, as healing cannot occur without meaningful interaction with others. Herman (1992) explains that aspects such as trust have to be reframed within the relational structures from which they originated.

- *Trust*

Chapter two, Sections 2.5.3 and 2.10.1 highlighted the importance of mutual trust, dependence and unconditional acceptance in developing relationships (Berckmans *et al.*, 2012). Most of the participants saw a horse following them of its own free will, without being led with a rope, as an example of this. Jaydene summed up this kind of trust by saying:

"... en dan hardloop ek so met my perd...en hy het heeltyd na my toe gekom en wou by my wees" ["... and then I run like that with my horse ... and he came to me the whole time and wanted to be with me"] (Jaydene).

Nicole was the only adolescent who did not voice trust as a part of her experience, although she did form a connection with a horse during the EAL programme. Of the participants, she seemed to be the one who took the longest to become confident around horses and to interact spontaneously with them. Chandler (2005) holds that in human-animal relationships, feelings of trust are strengthened as people engage with the animals, reconnecting with feelings of hope and

faith in themselves. Their understanding of trust or hope is progressively transformed, opening up the possibility of new relations with other individuals in society (Garcia, 2010).

Trotter (2012), as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.10.2, maintains that the relationship established between an individual and a horse is further characterized by expressions of affection or love, as the person projects his or her care directly onto the animal. The following response from Superboy highlighted this affection between human and horse:

"Ja, hy [perd] het vir my druk gegee en so, dit was ook groot ervarings...en toe het ek ook saam met hom gewerk en so het hy ook vir my lief geraak ..." ["Yes, he [the horse] also gave me a hug and so on, it was big experiences ... and then I worked with him, and so he also started to love me ..."] (Superboy).

Bachi *et al.* (2011) agree with Trotter (2012), saying that positive interactions with horses are often characterized by a visual demonstration of love and acceptance by both role-players. As noted in Chapter two, Sections 2.6, and 2.8.2, unconditional positive regard and acceptance are vital to optimizing the development of those in residential care (Schurink & Mathye, 1993; Bronkhorst, 2006; Marais, 2008). The findings show that all the participants voiced their affection for the horses they had chosen and interacted with them, indicating that some form of constructive rapport had been established between them and the animals.

Yorke *et al.* (2008) and Trotter (2012) argue that interacting with horses can strengthen and restore other human relationships, as traumatic experiences often cause people to feel disconnected from others and the world around them. In this study, the participants felt that their connection with the horses was demonstrated through the horses' behavioural responses. These consisted of the horses recognizing and showing interest in the participants, as well as listening to them.

"En as jy die perd roep dan kom hy ... hy [perd] onthou mos dis ek wat hier gewees het ... hy like my mos ..." ["And if you call the horse, then he comes ... he [the horse] remembers that it's me that was there ... he likes me ..."] (Jaydene).

The findings indicated that all the participants felt they had been heard, understood and listened to while they engaged with the horses, as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.10.3. Both Kim and Jaydene said that they and the horses had shown a mutual interest in being with each other. From this it can be concluded that healthy connections or attachments were established between the horses and participants during the intervention programme.

- **Attachment**

Often unfavourable life experiences and events, such as neglect, abuse, and rejection, infringe on the attachments of various social systems, including family, friends and community (Bachi *et al.*, 2011). Chapter two, Section 2.10.2 highlighted the limited opportunities for AIRC to form secure attachments with other individuals, given the unstable nature of their developmental trajectories and the social environments in which they find themselves (The Commission for Adolescents and Young People and Child Guardian, 2012).

The findings revealed that each participant chose a different horse and gave them individual names. Brokfelt (2011) maintains that the act of naming an animal is significant, as the individual demonstrates his affinity for the creature, while simultaneously becoming close to it. Furthermore, by acknowledging the horse's existence and assigning an identity through naming, the individual positions him- or herself within a developing relationship (Brokfelt, 2011). Giving the horse a name helps the participant to identify more readily with it, which strengthens the bond between them. As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, the adolescent forms a personal identity as he or she interacts with the horse, developing a positive identity within a secure relationship.

York *et al.* (2008) emphasize the importance of interactive activities during EAL programmes, allowing the individual to explore the concept of attachment, both tangibly and expressively. Weston-Thomson (2010, p. 236) adds that grooming offers people the chance to experience how horses can regulate human emotions in a "synergistic manner". For example, as the horses are groomed they become more relaxed and so does the individual. Bachi *et al.* (2011, p. 300) hold that "the stable presence of the horse embraces the client both physically and emotionally", in way seldom realized in most therapeutic relationships. Both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, such as care and emotional self-regulation, are thus strengthened through the grooming exercise, as nurturance is simultaneously given and received (VanDierendonck & Goodwin, 2005).

After the intervention, several participants said that they longed to see the horses again, and that this longing had affected the course of their daily lives:

"Ek mis maar eintlik die perde ding wat ons gedoen het. In die aande lê ek so wakker ... ek dink, ek kan nie so slaap nie ... want ek mis hulle [perde] baie ..." ["I actually miss

the horse thing that we did. At night I lie awake ... I think, I can't sleep ... because I miss them [the horses] a lot ..."] (Jaydene).

According to Sklare (2009), if a healthy attachment has been established, it is normal once separation has occurred for the individual to experience feelings of longing, loneliness or a sense of 'being lost'. The responses from the participants supported and confirmed the research findings on the fostering of sound relationships with others through the modality of EAL. Levin and Haines (2007, p. 233) argue that "attachment is moreover theorized to be the first communication" between an individual and a partner. Attention will be given to these aspects in the following chapter.

- ***Communication***

Results from the research showed that various means of communication were present during the intervention programme. The adolescents communicated with the horses, with each other, and with the therapists, as well as with other significant individuals such as family members and support professionals. In particular, they engaged with the horses using verbal language as well as touching (stroking) the animal:

"En toe sê ek vir hom [perd] 'kom kom' ... en die perd ek het heeltyd saam met gepraat ook ..." ["And then I said to him [the horse] 'come come' ... and I talked to the horse the whole time as well ..."] (Superboy).

"Aan sy gesig, aan sy stert, sy lyf, sy bene gevryf en geborsel ..." ["I stroked and brushed his face, his tail, his body, his legs"] (Nicole).

Interaction with horses encouraged both verbal and non-verbal communication, as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.3.10. Holmes (2003, p. 1) believes that "there is no endeavour that will more quickly and effectively teach you awareness of your own body language than learning the principles of working with horses." The findings indicated that the participants felt encouraged to communicate with the animals by giving them names, by talking to them, and by engaging in grooming exercises, as described in the previous sub-chapter.

As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, the development of language and communication skills during the adolescent phase can be encouraged through interactive experiences. Levin and Haines (2007, p. 231) record that adolescents who find themselves in residential care experience "limited opportunities for language learning offered by their peers", with significant delays in

establishing communicative competence. The interaction between the participants themselves, however, could be sometimes be less constructive:

"Was so lekker ... bly ek heelyd vir Nicole [skuilnaam vir deelnemer] sê I love my horses very much ... en soms dan bly ons [deelnemers] partykeer so stry ..." ["It was so nice ... I kept on saying to Nicole [participant] I love horses very much ... and sometimes we [participants] kept on arguing ..."] (Jaydene).

More often, though, it was both supportive and educative in nature:

"Die tweede dag was Nicole ook bang ... toe sê ek vir haar jy moenie bang wees nie, ek was ook so ... en toe sê sy ok, toe vat sy die borsel toe begin sy die perd te borsel ..." ["the second day Nicole was also scared ... then I said to her you mustn't be scared, I was also like that ... and then she said OK, then she took the brush and then she started to brush the horse ..."] (Jaydene).

Participation in the EAL programme enabled the participants to share their experiences with each other, promoting knowledge, social interaction and language expression. Furthermore, they voiced their experiences to individuals in various other systems in the community, including the therapists, the residential staff at the CYCC, school educators, and family members. Examples of these voiced insights were presented in Chapter four, Sections 4.3.1-4.3.4.

The findings revealed that all the participants were able successfully to communicate their experiences to others, helping them to become more self-assured, in addition to being pleased with the knowledge and aptitude they had developed (Burgon, 2011). Informing others of their experiences also raised their awareness about EAL, offering hope and inspiration to those in similar circumstances. Eller (2010, p. 181) suggests that communication or sharing understandings within relationships such as those of family, friends and communities, "can be restructured and restored throughout interactions in life." The interaction with horses and their shared experiences allowed the participants to realize this in their own lives.

York *et al.* (2008, p. 17) emphasize that sound relationships between humans and horses lead to in positive outcomes for all those involved, with "trust, rapport, acceptance, collaboration and communication." The fostering of relationships between humans and horses is a prized instrument in the realization of an improved quality of life.

4.4.3 Personal well-being

- *Emotional welfare*

According to Weston-Thompson (2010, p. 233), "horses are archetypal in that they evoke powerful emotional sensations in human beings." As noted in Chapter four, Sections 4.3.1-4.3.4, when they first interacted with the horses, all the adolescents felt unconfident, afraid and withdrawn. However, as they spent time with the horses, their self-confidence increased.

"... eers toe was ek mos so bang vir hom [perd] gewees en almal [deelnemers] was so bang gewees maar na die tyd dat hulle ons die aktiwiteit klaar gedoen het toe aanvaar ek nou dat 'n mens hoef nie bang te wees nie ..." ["... At first, I was so scared of him [the horse] and everyone [participants] was so scared, but after they finished the activity then I accepted that you don't have to be afraid ..."] (Superboy).

Stanton *et al.* (2010) state that unfamiliar environments encourage people to take risks and this in turn results in both mental and emotional changes. These changes offer opportunities for growth and learning. The participants experienced an increase in their self-esteem as their fear of the horses decreased, promoting their overall well-being.

Some of the participants empathized with the horses and verbalized that the animals experienced some discomfort during the interaction with them. They referred to the unfavourable manner in which the horses were treated, adding that they might have felt scared or uncomfortable, and that they clearly did not enjoy being nudged.

"Hulle het om die perd gestaan en jokes gemaak en dan druk hulle hier by die perd se kant ... so dit kan nie lekker gevoel het nie" ["They stood around the horse, making jokes, and then they press here at the horse's side ... so it couldn't have felt nice"] (Kim).

As mentioned in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, adolescents who have been exposed to adverse circumstances find it difficult to show feelings such as compassion, care and understanding. A strong connection between neglect and the inability to demonstrate empathy has been noted in those who have experienced abandonment in various forms (Burgon, 2011). Interaction with horses can strengthen their feelings of empathy, as they are made aware of the needs of beings different from themselves.

Frewin and Gardiner (2005, cited in Ratliffe & Sanekane, 2009, p. 34) describe the unique experience of interacting with a large animal, which provides the opportunity to promote emotional well-being as individuals "work through fear, develop empathy, cooperate with others, and to develop self-confidence". Faa-Thompson (2010) and Chandler (2005) concur, adding that at-risk individuals become less self-focused and demonstrate an increase in mindfulness towards events around them in their environment.

- ***Psychological welfare***

In a reference in Chapter one, Section 1.1.2, Van Rooyen and Hartell (2002), describing the desire for novel experiences of AIRC, note that they need first-hand skills, reinforced by acknowledgment and appreciation. Four of the five participants in this study interacted with horses for the first time, offering them a variety of unique experiences, from grooming the animals to guiding them over obstacle courses. The following response summed up these experiences:

"Ek was verbaas ... toe sê ek vir myself dit is nou die eerste keer nou dat ek 'n perd sien en naby 'n perd staan ... so sê ek aanmekaar vir myself ..." ["I was surprised ... then I said to myself this is now the first time that I see a horse and stand close to a horse ... so I kept on saying to myself ..."] (Jaydene).

Stanton *et al.* (2010, p. 205) agree with Van Rooyen and Hartell (2002), saying that a "sense of achievement is experienced" together with an increase in personal self-esteem when individuals successfully complete an activity with a horse. The success which the participants found during the sessions was further acknowledged and celebrated by the therapists through both verbal and non-verbal gestures:

"Toe sê hulle 'mooi' ons het dit gedoen ... toe klap hulle hande vir ons want ons het ook saamgewerk en so-aan ..." ["Then they said, 'well done', we did it ... then they applauded us because we also cooperated and so on ..."] (Superboy).

Receiving praise for achievements increases an individual's motivation, as well as making him or her feel noticed, accepted and cared for (Trotter, 2012). At-risk adolescents are seldom exposed to positive and appreciative feedback, since their behaviour and attitudes are often not deemed socially acceptable. Chandler (2005) and Trotter (2012), however, observe that horses offer social and emotional support because they accept people regardless of their appearance, social or economic status.

Emotions of happiness, joy and excitement were expressed by all the participants throughout the programme:

"Ek was opgewonde saam perde en so-aan en dit was baie lekker ..." ["I was excited with horses and so on, and it was very nice ..."] (Superboy).

"Ek het baie gelukkig gevoel ..." ["I felt very happy ..."] (Jaydene).

Trotter (2012) says that interaction with horses is characterized by pleasure, as individuals engage in aesthetic and powerful experiences with sensitive and compassionate beings. As noted in Chapter one, Section 1.2.2, EAL interventions are recognized as a more pleasurable alternative to traditional treatment modalities, because of their interactive and experiential nature (Schultz, 2005). One participant referred to recurring memories, while two others spoke about dreams they had had following the EAL intervention:

"Ek het daaroor gedroom hoe werk mens met 'n perd ... en in my drome ek leer die kinders hoe werk met 'n perd so en dit was baie lekker ..." ["I dreamt about how you work with a horse ... and in my dreams I taught the adolescents how you work with a horse, and it was very nice ..."] (Jaydene).

For Osterweil (2007), dreams aid the brain in the merging of semantic memories, as well as processing emotion-related experiences, thus helping people to place things into perspective and to conceptualize their interactive experiences more comprehensively. Bonding with horses encouraged the development of the participants' of social competence, as described below.

- ***Social competence***

Eller (2010, p. 181) argues that "the self must be looked at in context and in action, not in isolation, if it is to be understood and developed." References to team work and social interaction were highlighted in the research data. However, the participants agreed that engaging with each other was often a challenge, and that they would have preferred to work independently with the horses:

"Maar om saam te werk maar dit was 'n bietjie difficult maar agterna het almal begin toe saamwerk ..." ["But to work together, it was a bit difficult but afterwards everybody started to work together ..."] (Superboy).

Superboy admitted that teamwork was a challenge, but felt that with perseverance success could be achieved. During the programme, the adolescents often referred to their social interaction with the horses as play. The following response serves as an example:

"Om met die perde te hardloop en te speel ... dit was lekker ... mens moet meer met 'n perd speel ..." ["To run with the horses and to play ... it was nice ... you should play more with a horse ..."] (Jaydene).

Chapter two, Sections 2.9.1 and 2.10.3, showed that socially interactive activities, such as playing with horses, could promote qualities such as social language, as well as a sense of belonging, joy and happiness for both horses and humans. Eller (2010, p. 181) concurs, adding that interacting with others, including horses, "provides a nurturing and developmental environment of discovering the skills and knowledge of community." Aspects relating to learning and development, as revealed in the findings, are examined below.

4.4.4 Learning and development

In residential care, learning, development and overall experience of life occur primarily in one setting (Levin & Haines, 2007). Limitations of resources, coupled with exposure to a variety of stimulating experiences, make the attainment of knowledge, skills and attitudes challenging. Results from the investigation suggest that the participants faced challenges with gaining knowledge, strengthening their life skills, and constructing life goals or future ideals.

- ***Knowledge***

One of the participants developed an understanding of horses' sleeping habits, while others became aware of the way horses were cared for, as well as how they expressed their feelings.

"Ek het nooit geweet 'n mens kan 'n perd borsel nie ... en ek het altyd gedink perde is altyd onbeskof ... ek dink nou ek hou van perde. Perde, perde is nou nie so onbeskof nie ... perde is eintlik nie onbeskof nie ..." ["I never knew that you can brush a horse ... and I always thought that horses are always angry ... I think now I like horses, horses are not so angry ... horses are actually not angry ..."] (Jaydene).

According to Trotter (2012, p. 6), the "interaction with animals teaches in a concrete experiential manner the needs of the animal," enhancing learning experiences and making the individual more aware of the needs of others. As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, the

cognitive development of at-risk individuals is often restricted due to the traumas they have faced in their lives. Concrete, hands-on learning is most effective in promoting the learning potential of such adolescents in residential care.

Several of the participants referred to the similarities between human and equine behaviour, feelings and attitudes, as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.9.1. They described the horses as being scared or angry, but also naturally good and needing to be loved.

"Die perd is baie goed net soos die mens ..." [Geskrif op plakkaat] ["The horse is very good, just like a human ..."] [written on a poster] (Kim).

Nussen (2010, p. 49) argues that horses and humans share similar characteristics, and this enables horses to become teachers of "self-awareness, honest communication, trust, healthy boundaries, leadership, patience, assertiveness, play, affection, nurturance and more." Vygotsky (1978, cited in Trotter, 2012) believed that learning is optimized when it occurs in meaningful relationships. As noted in Chapter four, Section 4.3.2, each participant seemed to establish a sound relationship with at least one horse, encouraging the development of the above knowledge and skills. In addition, the participants said that acquiring skills relating to problem solving, observation and awareness of consequences was also part of the programme.

- *Life skills*

Burgon (2011) describes the various challenges which individuals face when they engage with horse during an EAL programme. Apart from using concentration, boldness and leadership to gain the horse's trust and collaboration, they were also required to solve problems relating to human interactions. As previously noted, they encountered difficulties with working together in a group. Jaydene recalled her experience of this, as well as how she went about solving the problem:

"Miskien hulle [deelnemers] twee sry ... dan sê ek sommer ... nou gaan ek die perd vat en dan vat sy die perd ..." ["Maybe the two of them [participants] argue ... then I just say ... now I'm going to take the horse, and then she takes the horse ..."] (Jaydene).

For those adolescents who tend to risk-taking behaviour, interventions which focus on generating alternate solutions to difficulties are most effective, as noted by Sharp and Dellis (2011). Since Jaydene was one of the less vocal or spontaneous members of the group, her demonstration of assertiveness was evidence of her personal development. As noted in Chapter

two, Section 2.7.1, the more adolescents can strengthen their life skills, the more the impact of risk factors will be reduced (Russell-Martin, 2006).

The participants recorded their observations of the horses during the intervention. They were impressed by their strength and size, but also wondered whether a mare was pregnant due to the size of her stomach:

"Hulle is so swaar en sterk perde en hulle is baie sterk en elkeen het sy bene en dan voel ek so sy bene en dis net sterk ..." ["They are so heavy and strong, and they are very strong and each one has his legs, and then I feel his legs like this, and it's just strong ..."] (Superboy).

"Ek het nie geweet 'n perd se maag is so groot nie ...verwag die perd want dit is 'n meisie?" ["I didn't know a horse's tummy is so big ... is the horse pregnant, because it's a girl?"]

As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, people are often intimidated by the size and power of horses, helping them to develop respect for the animals (Kohanov, 2001). As they become curious about the horses' behaviour, their observation and questioning skills are strengthened. The participants in this study also became aware of the boundaries which horses can establish during interactions:

"En die perde wou toe skop as ons vinnig naby kom ..." ["The horses wanted to kick if we came close too quickly ..."] (Jaydene).

Through these experiences, the adolescents became more aware of aspects such as limit setting, decision making, and the consequences of their choices. According to Trotter (2012), people become aware of the parameters present when engaging with horses, and consequently learn to extend these to other individuals with whom they have a relationship. My research findings suggested that the adolescents became cognizant of future possibilities which involved possible continued interaction with horses. A discussion on this will now be presented.

- ***Future possibilities***

Burgon (2011) stresses the importance of new experiences as part of adolescents' learning and development in life. Finley (2008) concurs, adding that adolescents who find themselves in residential care often have limited opportunities to engage in new experiences due to inadequate

resources. Involvement in novel activities may help them to develop positive opportunities in the future. Several participants voiced their future goals after taking part in the programme and interacting with horses:

"Ek wil ook eendag op 'n perd ook klim en saam met hom ry ..." ["I also one day want to get on to a horse and ride with him ..."] (Superboy).

"... as ek eendag huistoe gaan en dan dan gaan ek my perd ook so maak ... hul [perde] gewoond te maak aan die kinders en so, hy moet nie vir hulle skop nie ... en vir hulle wys [leer] om mooi met hom [perd] te werk ..." ["... if I go home one day and then I will also make my horse like this ... to make them [horses] used to adolescents and so on, he mustn't kick them ... and show[teach] them how to work with him [the horse] ..."] (Kim).

Horses can help people to overcome gaps in learning, as interacting with them heightens the senses, and stimulates the brain to integrate and process information more readily (Stanton *et al.*, 2010). Trotter (2012, p. 7) supports this notion, suggesting that animal-assisted interventions are opportunities for individuals to promote "healing, learning, stimulation, curiosity and attachments."

In the light of these results, a summary and the conclusions drawn from the findings of this research investigation are given below.

4.5 SUMMARY

The findings of this investigation showed that all the participants developed personal attachments or relationships with the horses on various levels, which in turn strengthened their self-confidence, self-respect, and empathy, as well as making them aware of their own attributes, whether strengths and weaknesses. From being understood by these sensitive creatures, they discovered a sense of belonging, of acceptance. Feelings of delight and pleasure as well as frustration were voiced as they strengthened their social competence through playing with the horses, working together in a group, or sharing their experiences with various individuals in the community.

They acquired new knowledge about horses and their life skills were strengthened. They were placed in situations which involved a degree of risk and uncertainty, but which challenged them to grow, learn and develop. These trends were noted, as well as evidence of improvements in

"trust, concentration, communication skills, and language" (Gamashe, 2004, p. 2). York *et al.* (2008, p. 19) found that "recovery from trauma as well as other psycho-social problems requires a close personal connection that is caring, consistent, trusting and safe." This research confirmed that such a bond was forged between the adolescents and the horses during the EAL programme.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The overall aim of this chapter was to present and discuss the findings of the study, as they related to the main themes which emerged from the data. This was achieved through analysing the demographic details of the participants. A brief description of each participant's background was given, including the themes drawn from the individual case studies. Chapter five presents my conclusions, based on the research findings and framed within Bronfenbrenners' bio-ecological theory, as noted in Chapter two, Section 2.4.1.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research investigation was to explore the experiences of adolescents in residential care as they took part in an Equine-Assisted Learning programme. This final chapter discusses the findings of the study as they respond to the following research question:

What are the experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

The secondary research question was designed to further enrich my conceptualization of the adolescents' experience of the intervention programme:

What understandings of themselves do adolescents voice after participating in an Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) programme?

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory formed the theoretical framework for this interactive, qualitative research. An adapted version of bio-ecological model (see Figure 5.1) assisted me in locating and conceptualizing the various factors (contextual, individual, process-related or time-related) which were likely to contribute to shaping AIRC experiences of an EAL programme. The research methodology, consisting of collages, individual interviews, a focus group interview and within-case and across-case data analysis, complemented both the research design and the research purpose. These components guided me in interpreting the findings in this chapter.

After interpreting the research findings, I will review the strengths and limitations of the study, and then highlight recommendations for future research in the field. Finally, I will put forward my reflections on the research process and my concluding remarks.

5.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The main findings of this study were that AIRC experiences of an EAL programme were positive and that aspects such as relationships, attachments, self-esteem, empathy, social competence, the mastery of knowledge and skills, and the advancement of future possibilities

were all strengthened. These elements will be discussed and interpreted as they relate to the research questions which guided the study, against the backdrop of the literature review. This will be done in accordance with the themes which emerged from the research data.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Conceptualisation of EAL experiences

While interpreting and placing the findings of this study within the bio-ecological framework, I became aware of how various factors mentioned in Chapter two, Sections 2.4 and 2.5, shaped conceptualization by AIRC of their experiences of the EAL programme. At the beginning of the intervention, the participants were enthusiastic about the prospect of interacting with horses. This correlates with Parshall's (2003) conclusion that EAL programmes encourage biological and developmental aspects such as pleasure, risk-taking and active exploration or experimentation, thus fulfilling the developmental needs of AIRC within a safe and controlled milieu (Parshall, 2003; Wild & Swartz, 2011).

The participants voiced a desire to take part in future EAL programmes, indicating an inner drive and motivation towards participating in support interventions of the same nature as well as improving their overall development and well-being, as noted in the research conducted by Risley-Curtiss (2010). Access to EAL intervention programmes has become more prevalent in modern times, as professionals consider experiential treatment and educational programmes a valuable means of support. From the research findings, I concluded that all the participants had had a positive and uplifting experience of the EAL programme.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Relationships

Several contextual, biological and time-related variables could have had a marked impact on how some of the AIRC experienced the EAL programme. These included lack of care and support in caring environments, distressing events, and an absence of attachment figures. According to the literature, AIRC often have limited meaningful and trusting relationships in their lives, due to social challenges such as trauma, poverty, losing parents from AIDS, as well as continuously being placed in various residential care centres (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994; Karabanow & Clement, 2004; Ewing *et al*, 2007).

In this study, four of the adolescents developed a sense of trust between themselves and the horses. This was shown when the horses followed them of their own free-will, without being led by a rope. Through this bond with the horses, they were brought into contact with more resilient

factors inside themselves, such as hope and confidence, which reshaped their ability to place their trust in other people and in the available support systems (Garcia, 2010).

From the findings, it was evident that the participants bonded freely with their horses. This could be described as 'a connection beyond the rope', as a secure bond was fostered between the horses and adolescents. Each child named the horse to which he or she became attached, and a clear personal note was seen in the way they referred to 'my horse' or 'mine'. In this way, they developed an awareness of their own identity and a sense of belonging, as they immersed themselves in the developing relationship with the horse (Brokfelt, 2011). Thus the bond with horses allowed them to explore their maturing personal identity in a healthy relationship within a safe environment.

Empowered as they felt heard and understood by the horses, they also said that they longed to see the horses again. These utterances confirmed that a sense of healthy attachment had grown up between them and the horses during the EAL programme (Sklare, 2009). Their voiced experiences agree with the research of Trotter (2012), who argues that, once a healthy relationship has been fostered with horses, this can be transferred to human relations, promoting sound interpersonal connections between AIRC and various microsystems within the larger society. Such systems include family, peers, and the school context.

A sense of mutual dependence and care between the participants and horses was noted in the research findings. Physical expressions of love included hugging the horses, which the participants interpreted as being accepted and loved by the animals. Bachi *et al.*, (2011) support this finding, adding that adolescents often contrast feeling understood, valued and accepted unreservedly by horses with their existing relationships with parents or family members, in which human love has proved to be unsuccessful or absent (Bronkhorst, 2006). The closeness of the bonds established with the horses, evolved over a period of three weeks, therefore had a significant influence on the adolescents' positive response to the programme.

Taking part in the EAL programme also gave the adolescents the opportunity to strengthen their communication skills with humans as well as the horses. According to Levin and Haines (2007), AIRC find it a challenge to converse with peers because of difficulties with language. This interactive experience encouraged the adolescents to engage in conversations with each other and to strengthen their confidence in verbal communication. Their discussions included problem-solving, making decisions, offering encouragement, and voicing their feelings about

the sessions. They also shared their discoveries with family members, support staff at the CCYC, and their teachers at school.

The findings showed that other participants in the EAL programme were better able to communicate their experiences, and that the time factor had a significant impact on the way AIRC conceptualized their own responses. Eller (2010) argues that sharing experiences invites the re-establishment of existing relationships between individuals, in this case strengthening the support network for future development of the AIRC.

The participants communicated with the horses using both verbal and non-verbal means. This included talking to the horses, using personal body language, and employing non-verbal cues to convey messages. The data showed that they became attuned to the horses' reactions to their behaviour and ways of communicating during the sessions. Holmes (2003) maintains that interaction with horses promotes self-awareness about non-verbal communication, encouraging AIRC to reflect on their personal non-verbal communication both with other individuals and the world around them.

This relates to the statement of Weston-Thompson (2010, p. 234) that "horses pull you into relationship if you are willing and walk away from you if you are not." Depending on their openness to such a connection, the participants fostered meaningful relationships with their horses. This echoes the conclusion of Yorke *et al.* (2008) that the bond created between horses and people includes features such as trust, attachment, communication and relationships, all of which were seen to be reinforced during the EAL programme.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Personal well-being

In accordance with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, the individual, as an element within the broader mesosystem, is also a pertinent factor in constructing the experiences of AIRC in the EAL programme. As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.5.4.2, development and growth of the emotional, social and psychological aspects of AIRC were highlighted in the research findings.

An increase in the participants' self-esteem, assertiveness and empathy was evident in the data collected. They became more confident around the horses as the sessions evolved, seizing opportunities related to taking risks, assuming leadership, and becoming aware of the horses' feelings, as well as working as part of a team. Johnson *et al.* (2006) confirm that contact with horses encourages individuals to develop a fresh poise, physically, emotionally and mentally, leading to a different outlook on life itself.

Finely (2008) claims that novel experiences offer developmental and learning opportunities for the individuals involved in this process. These include the attainment of self-awareness, self-reflection, and novel feelings or psychological states of mind. Whether living on the street, at home or in residential care, AIRC are exposed to experiences which hold limited promise of positive or constructive outcomes (Zegers *et al.*, 2008). Exposure to horses allows them to become mindful of their personal actions and attitudes, as well as the effect their behaviour may have on their environment (Shultz, 2005). Through the honest feedback horses provided, the adolescents in this study were invited to take an introspective view of themselves, making the changes needed to realize a meaningful interaction with the animals.

Because of the various developmental and social deficits they face during their lives, achievements are few and far between for AIRC. The participants of this study, however, gained a sense of success and accomplishment, overcoming their fears, establishing a sound relationship with the horses, successfully completing their activities with the animals, and working together as a group.

Praise and encouragement from the therapists helped shape their experiences of the programme. Feelings of being acknowledged, of their efforts being valued and that they were doing things 'right' were recorded in the findings. As AIRC often behave in ways which challenge social norms, so positive behaviour or attitudes are seldom noticed or recognized. In this study, the participants' responses corresponded to the findings of Van Rooyen and Hartell (2002) on the need for appreciation and recognition for admirable behaviour in the lives of AIRC. Finely (2008) agrees, stating that developing a relationship with horses can make people proud of themselves and their efforts.

The research findings also included evidence of active social interaction between the participants themselves. Although they may not all have enjoyed working together, the adolescents were still able to succeed as a group as they completed the various activities in the EAL programme. Eller (2010) underscores the value of community and social interaction between individuals as an important aspect of development. Thus in terms of increased self-esteem, self-awareness, social competence and the ability to achieve success, the experiences from this programme had positive spin-offs.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Learning and development

Factors which influenced the AIRC experience of the EAL programme included, among others, knowledge of the world and the social environment, acquiring life skills, and exposure to novel experiences. The data showed that four of the five participants were interacting with horses for the first time, and that this experience opened up new avenues of exploration, knowledge realization and skills development. Knowing how to take care of horses, learning appropriate ways to interact with the animals, and gaining self-knowledge were all developed during the sessions.

As the participants interacted with the animals on a concrete level, they learned to apply the knowledge they had gained to their own life circumstances (Trotter, 2012). For example, they became aware of the horses' feelings and needs, such as being loved, and related the same needs back to their own personal desires. The temperamental similarities between the horses and the participants allowed these creatures to act as natural instructors in real life truths and skills (Nussen, 2010). My findings correlated with the literature (Burgon, 2011), in that life skills such as assertiveness, and understanding of choice and consequences, problem-solving, observation, effective communication, respect and mindfulness were all explored and strengthened during the programme sessions.

Engaging with the horses made the participants aware of future possibilities and life goals to which they could look forward. Their responses showed a desire to work with horses, learning to ride them, as well as sharing the knowledge that they gained from them with other people. In the future, this could include teaching young children the appropriate ways to interact with and treat horses. The participants felt motivated and inspired by the horses and projected this enthusiasm into their future life ideals (Trotter, 2012). Their experiences of the EAL programme propelled them into a state of self-reflection and planning for future possibilities.

Given the above-mentioned conclusions, Figure 5.1 below gives a diagrammatic view of how the findings of this study were situated and interpreted within Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model.

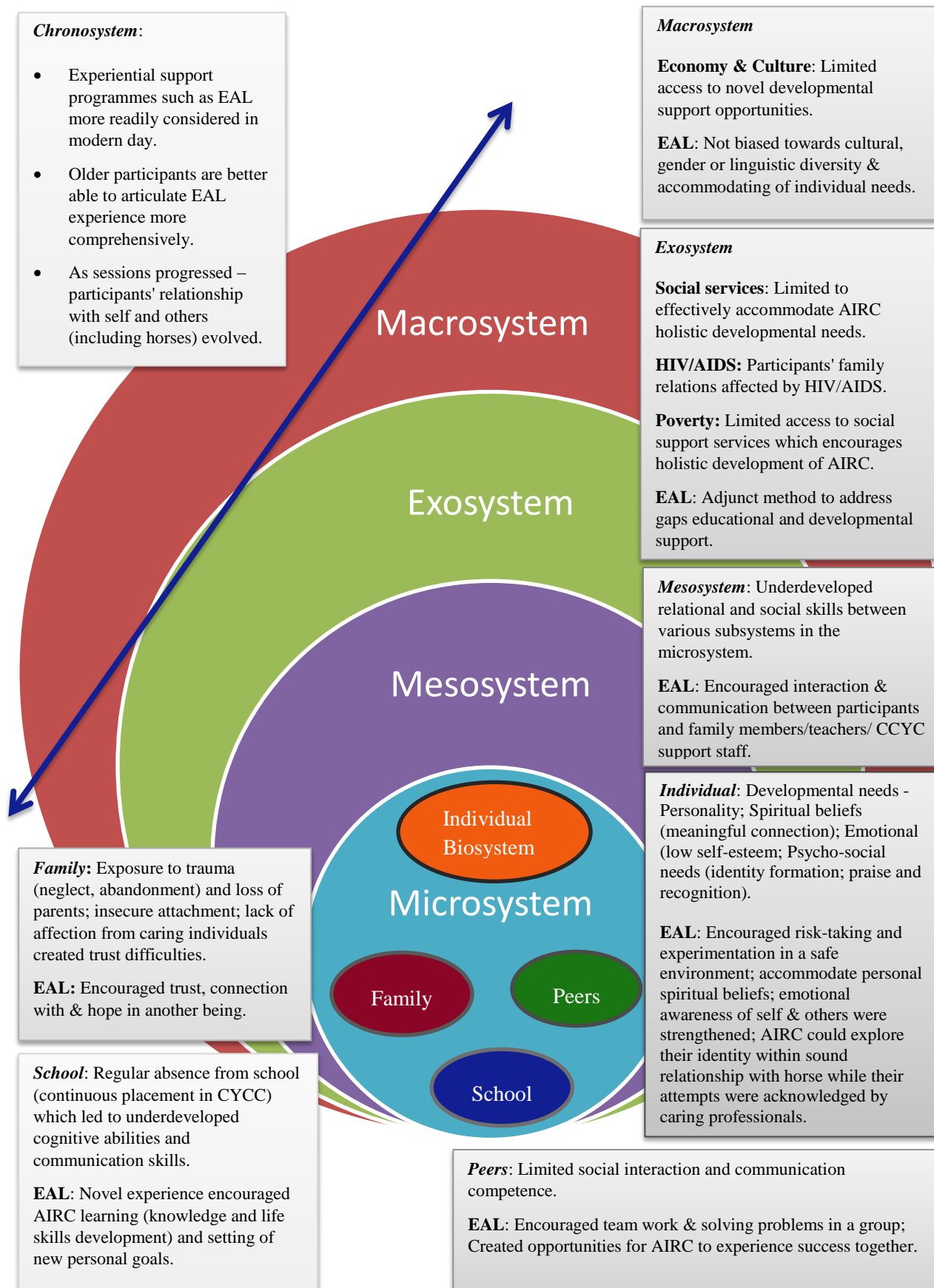


Figure 5.1: AIRC experiences of participating in the EAL programme as conceptualized within the bio-ecological framework (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model in McWhirter *et al.*, 2007, p. 19)

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In view of the participants' positive experiences during this study, Equine-Assisted Learning should be considered as a viable learning and development model to support the needs of AIRC. The participants' new understanding of themselves included being able to foster meaningful relationships with other people, being valued and loved, and extending care, respect and empathy to others in their environment. They became aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, learning to work with others to accomplish goals and to overcome their fears.

The following recommendations are therefore made:

- Future research investigations into EAL should involve adolescents from diverse demographical areas (provinces) in South Africa and from diverse cultures and language backgrounds.
- Since the participants' demonstrated limited skills in verbal expression, further research should consider using data collection methods which are not based solely on verbal language and should rather include observations or behavioural checklists.
- Concrete media, such as pictures or video clips taken during the intervention sessions, could be incorporated into the individual interviews to help the participants to conceptualize their experiences more effectively.
- The researcher should consider increasing the number of individual case studies to be investigated, so as to avoid the limitations of data from a small number of cases.
- Further studies should consider incorporating follow-up interviews after six months with the participants to determine the extent to which they applied their experiences of the EAL programme to their personal lives and in real-life contexts.

5.4 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

5.4.1 Strengths

To my knowledge, this was the first study on AIRC taking part in EAL in South Africa. It has paved the way to developing an initial understanding of adolescents' experiences of an EAL programme and the effect such an intervention can have on their development and interactions within various social systems.

5.4.2 Limitations

The following limitations to the investigation were noted:

As the research took place in the Western Cape, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all AIRC population groups in South Africa. Chapter three, Section 3.6 provided a comprehensive description of the research methodology used, one which could help potential researchers in the field to transfer the findings of this research to other contexts.

Challenges relating to the participants' language expression may have influenced the quality of the data collected, since they found it difficult to articulate a comprehensive explanation of their experiences. As noted by Martin and Jackson (2002), because of language barriers, AIRC are often unable comprehensively to describe their experiences. The data collection methods used included collages, individual semi-structured interviews, and a group interview. These methods were language-based, limiting the full extent of the data which might otherwise have been available.

Due to the unpredictability associated with residential care, one participant was not available for the individual and focus group interviews. Therefore only four in-depth case studies could be conducted, instead of the five originally planned. A larger number of case studies could have added richer data to the investigation.

As noted in Chapter two, Section 2.8.2, as treatment and educational modalities, animal-assisted interventions, including EAL, are not suitable for all individuals. Aspects such as health (allergies), fear of animals as well as individual preferences need be taken into account when research participants are selected (Morrison, 2007; Risley-Curtis, 2010).

In conclusion, despite these limitations, this explorative investigation pointed out various areas of potential future investigations in the field of EAL in the South African context.

5.5 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION

As a novice qualitative researcher, I underwent a variety of learning experiences. Some of these were enjoyable, while others were more challenging, yet all were enriching and encouraged both personal and professional development.

Becoming aware of the unpredictability of research was one of the first trials. Despite having thoroughly planned the study, the organization which would initially have given the EAL

intervention, cancelled their involvement following changes in their programme. I then had to come to terms with the notion that there were no guarantees about the outcomes of an investigation and that the process might not necessarily meet my expectations. However, the natural evolution of the research process carried me through to a successful outcome.

Locating another EAL intervention programme proved quite challenging, as Equine-Assisted Therapy is a novel therapy in South Africa. After numerous phone calls and hours of internet correspondence, a registered social worker, counsellor and equine specialist, all of whom were trained in Equine-Assisted Therapy, came together and combined their services for the purposes of the investigation. New dates and logistics for the EAL sessions were arranged and confirmed, although these changes did delay the research for nearly four weeks.

Additionally, I was not prepared for the degree of limitations with regard to the cognitive skills, vocabulary and language of participants which were revealed during the interviews. As a result, I had to adapt my questions to suit their developmental levels, while still ensuring that adequate data was collected to answer the research questions. During the focus group interview, some of the participants were more verbal and shared their experiences spontaneously, while others preferred to communicate using non-verbal behaviour, such as shaking their heads or smiling. I found this to be a challenge, as I had to take a more direct position while facilitating the discussion than I had initially planned, to ensure that all the participants had an opportunity to voice their experiences.

I also had to be aware of my own possible assumptions or personal bias, and their effect on obtaining trustworthy data. When I realized how limited the participants' verbal language skills were, I assumed that the data generated might not be relevant or applicable to answering the research question. However, while analysing the data, I remained objective and found the information to be thicker than I had initially expected. My mindfulness of factors such as transference and counter-transference were strengthened during the investigation.

Highlights of the research included listening to the adolescents' responses to the programme and sharing in their joy and happiness as they described their experiences with smiles on their faces. I found the data to be very interesting and informative, as well as relevant to the field of Educational Psychology. I believe the information about the adolescents' thoughts, feelings and behaviour could inform future educational and treatment programmes for AIRC.

In addition, I became aware of the various systemic factors which influenced the participants' conceptualization of their experiences, and this extended my understanding of the present social, political and economic challenges in South Africa and the extent of the influence of these factors on individuals' lives. This new understanding will be of great value to me in my future practice as an educational psychologist, as I work in diverse contexts and with various population groups within the broader society.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study represents an important first step in understanding the experiences of adolescents in residential care as they took part in an EAL programme in the South African context. Additionally, it highlights a need for more research on this topic. There is much more to be understood about the characteristics of this population and how their needs may be supported through experiential intervention programmes such as Equine-Assisted Learning.

I agree with Weston-Thompson (2010, p. 234) when he claims that "horses have an astounding ability to cut through the outer layers and quickly draw us into a deeper relationship with ourselves." A horse can make people aware of their own human needs and of who they are within themselves. Once the relationship with the self is restructured and strengthened, the individual can identify strengths and weaknesses that may either enhance or inhibit meaningful interaction with other individuals and in various social systems.

Through this awareness, AIRC can come to realize that, in order to develop, they have to look inward and make the changes which they have learned through the 'way of the horse'. In this study, EAL proved to be a promising resource for fostering such learning and maturing among adolescents in residential care.

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APPENDIX A

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FROM THE RESEARCH
AND ETHICS COMMITTEE (STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY)UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner**Approved with Stipulations**
Response to Modifications- (New Application)26-Apr-2013
FISCHER, Louise**Protocol #: HS884/2012****Title: The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy**

Dear Miss Louise FISCHER,

The **Response to Modifications - (New Application)** received on **11-Apr-2013**, was reviewed by members of **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **25-Apr-2013**.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: **25-Apr-2013 -24-Apr-2014**

The Stipulations of your ethics approval are as follows:

1. The locus of consent or assent must lie with individual participants. The research must ensure that participants fully understand that the research component of the EAL programme is completely voluntary (even if their guardian has agreed to participation) and that they are free to withdraw any point.**2. A waiver of parental consent would be acceptable in instances where parents are not contactable.****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 (HS884/2012)** 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 ApprovalPlease 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 (awyngaard@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 0218839027.

Included Documents:

Letter to REC
Consent form
Consent form
DESC Application
REC form
Revised permission letters final
Interview guide
Consent form
Revised Consent letters final
DESC Signatures
Research proposal
permission letter
REC Application
REC Signatures
Consent forms
Revised research proposal
Assent form
Consent form
Assent form
Response final letter
Revised DESC form
Questionnaire

Sincerely,

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

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research protocols at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch Universtiy Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research protocol and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Reports to Sponsor. When you submit the required reports to your sponsor, you **must** provide a copy of that report to the REC. You may submit the report at the time of continuing REC review.

9. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or phychologis provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

10. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

11. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

APPENDIX B

INTERVENTION PROVIDER CONSENT LETTER

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

MEd Research Study: "The Experiences of Adolescents in Residential Care participating in Equine Assisted Learning"

As a registered Social Worker [REDACTED] and certified EAGALA mental health professional [REDACTED] hereby consent to participating in providing the Equine Assisted Learning intervention for the aforementioned research study. I therefore give Miss Louise Fischer, a Masters' student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, permission to conduct the above-mentioned research investigation during the period April/ May 2013.

As a Counsellor and certified EAGALA mental health professional (membership number: [REDACTED]) hereby consent to participating in providing the Equine Assisted Learning intervention for the aforementioned research study. I therefore give Miss Louise Fischer, a Masters' student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, permission to conduct the above-mentioned research investigation during the period April/ May 2013.

The following procedures as explained to me by the researcher will be supported:

- *The researcher will be allowed to do individual interviews, a picture collage activity as well as a focus group interview with the participants, after they have participated in a three week Equine Assisted Learning intervention.*
- *The researcher will furthermore obtain permission from the residential institutions as well as the parents or guardians of the participants before she meets with the participants.*
- *The researcher will be permitted to meet with the participants to explain the research procedures and what will be expected of them*

I do understand that any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the organisation or participants will remain confidential. I also understand that the identities of the participating individuals will be safeguarded and that data gathered will be released to the supervisor assigned to the study, Dr L. Dreyer at the Department of Educational Psychology, Stellenbosch University. I am also aware that the individual interviews and focus group discussions will be audio-taped (verbatim) with the permission of the participants.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Date

4/3/2013

[REDACTED]

Date

4/3/2013

APPENDIX C

INTERVENTION PROVIDER CONSENT LETTER



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

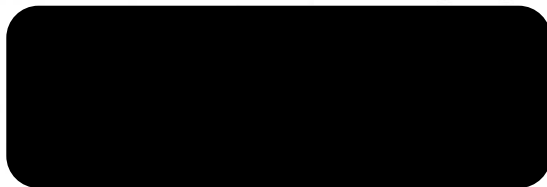
MEd Research Study: "The Experiences of Adolescents in Residential Care participating in Equine Assisted Learning"

As a certified EAGALA Equine Specialist, I [redacted] known as [redacted] gladly give Miss Louise Fischer, a master's student from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University, permission to conduct the above-mentioned research investigation at [redacted] during the period April/ May 2013.

The following procedures as explained to me by the researcher will be supported:

- *The researcher will be allowed to do individual interviews, a picture collage activity as well as a focus group interview with the participants, after they have participated in a three week Equine Assisted Learning intervention.*
- *The researcher will furthermore obtain permission from the residential institutions as well as the parents or guardians of the participants before she meets with the participants.*
- *The researcher will be permitted to meet with the participants to explain the research procedures and what will be expected of them*

I do understand that any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the organisation or participants will remain confidential. I also understand that the identities of the participating individuals will be safeguarded and that data gathered will be released to the supervisor assigned to the study, Dr L. Dreyer at the Department of Educational Psychology, Stellenbosch University. I am also aware that the individual interviews and focus group discussions will be audio-taped (verbatim) with the permission of the participants.



Signed: Intervention Provider

4/3/2015

Date



APPENDIX D

RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTION CONSENT LETTER



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Attention: The Directors of the Residential Care Institution

The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Learning

Dear Board Members and staff

Your organisation, is asked to participate in a research study conducted by Louise Fischer, B. Ed (Hons) Educational Psychology, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to the thesis completion of the research investigator, who is currently a Masters student in Educational Psychology. Your organisation was selected as a possible participant for this study because of:

- The nature of services currently provided by the organisation with regard to facilitating a residential care programme
- Services provided to the population group under investigation

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The intent of the proposed study would be to obtain an understanding of adolescents in residential care's experience of participating in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme.

The investigation will focus on gaining insight into the experiences of the adolescents as well as the meaning they give to their individual and shared experiences with regard to the Equine Assisted Learning programme.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 *Equine Assisted Learning Intervention*

- Once consent has been obtained from the organisation to take part in the intervention programme and research investigation, six adolescents (between the ages of 12 - 18) will be identified by die the organisation's residential social worker, to take part in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme.
- The EAL programme is provided by professional mental health workers, including a registered social worker (██████████) counsellor (██████████) and equine specialist (██████████). The professionals specialise in Equine Assisted Learning and received training in the EAGALA model.
- The programme furthermore consists of 6 sessions (60 minutes each) and the following dates have been suggested for the intervention to take place and are subject to change:
 - Friday 17 May 2013 (2 - 3pm)
 - Saturday 18 May 2013 (11 - 12am)
 - Monday 20 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
 - Monday 27 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
 - Wednesday 29 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
 - Thursday 30 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)

- The programme focuses on achieving educational and developmental outcomes. Please note that the programme will be adapted according to the adolescent's needs as identified by the social worker. The programme currently provided aims to reduce negative behaviours by increase life skills as well as promote the mental health of individuals according to their developmental and educational needs. These include:
 - Week 1 (Session 1): Orientation/ Trust
 - Week 1 (Session 2): Relationship building and Self-Awareness
 - Week 2 (Session 1): Communication
 - Week 2 (Session 2): Problem-solving
 - Week 3 (Session 1): Responsibility
 - Week 3 (Session 2): Self-confidence and Motivation
- Feedback with regard to the sessions and progress of the participants will be communicated to the organisations social worker, by the mental health professionals ([REDACTED]).
Please note, in order to prevent possible bias, the researcher will not be present at any of the sessions and/or have contact with the participants before the data collection phase commences.

2.2 The Research Investigation

Participants, who agree to participate in this research study, would be expected to do the following:

- *Projective method: Picture Collage*

The participants will be asked to create a collage using pictures from magazines to visually illustrate their experience of taking part in the EAL programme. The researcher will discuss the collage with each participant directly after completion, in order to understand and conceptualize the meaning each participant constructs around his or her experience. The duration of the collage activity and discussion will be approximately 40 minutes and will be done the week after the EAL intervention programme has been completed. The collage activity will take at the residential institution and/or house of safety.

- *Individual interviews*

A semi-structured interview of approximately 60 minutes will be conducted with the participants, two weeks after the EAL intervention. This interview will take place at the residential institution and/or house of safety where the participants are currently living. An interview guide will be used to explore their present understanding of their experiences of the intervention and the meaning they construct around their experience. Validation of information collected through the individual interviews will be done using a focus group interview.

- *Focus group interviews*

After the individual interview, all the participants will be asked to partake in a focus group discussion. The focus group will be led by the research investigator and topics that will be discussed include experiences the participants had during the intervention program. The focus group will last for approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted during the third week after the EAL intervention. The group interview will be held at the residential institution and/or house of safety.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

3.1 The potential risks and discomforts foreseen are:

- Since research will be conducted in an outdoor setting, the intervention may be cancelled due to unruly weather, and will be rescheduled accordingly.
- If after an extensive content review by both the researcher and supervisor, the participant may find any of the interview questions embarrassing or offensive, the participant may choose *not to answer them*. It should be noted that the answers to the questionnaires are confidential and will be treated so.
- The participants or researcher being absent due to health issues.

In the above mentioned scenarios, therapy sessions will be rescheduled according to the policies and procedures applied by the EAL intervention provider (s).

3.2 The psychological risks foreseen include:

These might possibly include re-activation of traumatic memories, which may cause discomfort and in a worst case lead to re-traumatization. The services of the following qualified health professional will be made available in case of any emergency:

- Mr [REDACTED], Counselling Psychologist
[REDACTED]

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Undertaking the proposed study will make a meaningful contribution to knowledge base of psychology in regard to exploring adolescents in residential care's experiences of participating in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will receive no remuneration of any nature for taking part in the study. Additionally the study procedures will be conducted at no cost to the participants and/or residential institution.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the residential care programme and the participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with the organisations permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing pseudo names to conceal the participants' identities. Research information (raw data) will be made available to the study's Supervisor (Dr L Dreyer) who oversees the research process. Both the individual interviews and focus group interviews will be taped using a digital recorder, with permission from the participants. Participants have the right to review/edit the tapes or any information they provide during the interviews. The audiotapes will be solely used for research purposes and will be kept for a time period of 5 years. Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, the participant's name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed.

Furthermore, data obtained from participants will be safeguarded and kept in a locked container. Only the researcher and supervisor will have right of entry of the container. Any information in electronic format will be stored on a password protected computer of which only the researcher has access to. Participants would be asked if they will be willing to be contacted at a later date in case a need to clarify any of the responses given during the interviews. This would involve obtaining their name, address, and phone number, and the name of another contact person in case they move or phone number changes.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in the study is voluntary. The participants could choose to take part in the EAL programme, but not participate in the research investigation. If the individuals volunteer to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They may also refuse to answer any questions they choose not to answer and still remain in the study. The research investigator may withdraw the participants from this research if circumstances arise which warrant Doing so:

- When a participant becomes a threat to the well-being of themselves or others for example demonstrating aggressive behaviour, emotional or verbal abuse etc.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If the participants, residential institution or service provider have any questions or concerns about the research they should feel free to contact the research investigator, Louise Fischer (+2783 232 3263) and/or the study Supervisor, Dr L. Dreyer (+27 808 3502). The research team may also be contacted via email: Louise Fischer (fishilouise@gmail.com) or Dr L. Dreyer (lornadreyer@sun.ac.za).

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The service providers, residential care institution and/or participants may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Your organisation is 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 PROGRAMME MANAGER AND/OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to the staff and board of directors associated with the residential care institution by Louise Fischer in English and 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 and provide an intervention programme for this study. I also consent to *having the data collected (participants interviewed, individually and in a group) as well as creating a collage, at the residential institution*. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Residential Institution Manager

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

**Signature of Residential Institution Manager
Or Legal Representative**

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to the manager of the residential care programme, _____ and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used during the meeting.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

PARENT/CUSTODIAN CONSENT LETTER



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Learning

Dear Parent/ Custodian

Your child is asked to participate in a research study conducted by Louise Fischer, B.Ed (Hons) Educational Psychology, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the study will contribute to the thesis completion of the research investigator, who is currently a Masters student in Educational Psychology. Your child was selected as a possible participant because of:

- His or her participation in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Programme for a period of three weeks.
- He or she forms part of the population group under investigation, adolescents between the ages of 12-18.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The intent of the proposed study would be to obtain an understanding of the adolescents in residential care's experience of participating in an Equine Assisted Learning programme. The investigation will focus on gaining insight into the experiences as well as the meaning these adolescents give to their individual and shared experiences with regard to the Equine Assisted Learning programme.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 *The Equine Assisted Learning Intervention*

The EAL programme is provided by mental health professionals, to be precise, a registered social worker (██████████), counsellor (██████████) and equine specialist (██████████). The professionals specialise in Equine Assisted Learning and received training in the EAGALA model. Please visit the website at www.██████████.co.za to find out more about the equine assisted learning programmes currently provided by (██████████) and (██████████).

The programme furthermore consists of 6 sessions (60 minutes each) and will take place at (██████████). The following dates have been suggested for the intervention to take place (but are subject to change):

- o Friday 17 May 2013 (2 - 3pm)
- o Saturday 18 May 2013 (11 - 12am)
- o Monday 20 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- o Monday 27 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- o Wednesday 29 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- o Thursday 30 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)

The programme focuses on outcomes which is *educational and developmental in nature* such as life skills development. Please note that the programme will be adapted according to the adolescent's needs as identified by the social worker. The programme currently provided aims to reduce negative behaviours by increase life skills as well as promote the mental health of individuals according to their developmental and educational needs. These include:

- o Week 1 (Session 1): Orientation/ Trust
- o Week 1 (Session 2): Self-Awareness and Relationship building
- o Week 2 (Session 1): Communication
- o Week 2 (Session 2): Problem-solving
- o Week 3 (Session 1): Responsibility
- o Week 3 (Session 2): Self-confidence and Motivation

Feedback with regard to the sessions and progress of the participants will be communicated to the organisations social worker, by the mental health professionals ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]). Please note, in order to prevent possible bias, the researcher will not be present at any of the sessions and/or have contact with the participants before the data collection phase commences.

2.2 The Research Investigation

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, the following would be expected:

- *Projective method: Picture Collage*

Your child will be asked to create a collage using pictures from magazines to visually illustrate his/her experience of taking part in the EAL programme. The researcher will discuss the collage with each participant directly after completion, in order to understand and conceptualise the meaning the individual has constructed around their experience. The duration of the collage activity and discussion will be approximately 40 minutes and will be done the week after the EAL intervention programme has been completed. This collage activity will take place at residential institution and/or house of safety.

- *Individual interview*

A semi-structured interview will be conducted with him/her, two weeks after the EAL intervention. This interview of approximately 60 minutes will take place at the residential institution and/or house of safety. An interview guide will be used to explore his/her present understanding of his/her experiences of the intervention and the meaning he/she constructs around their experience. Validation of information collected through the individual interviews will be done using a focus group interview.

- *Focus group interviews*

After the individual interview, your child will be asked to participate in a focus group interview with individuals who participated in the same EAL programme as they did. The focus group will be led by the research investigator and topics that will be discussed include experiences your child and the other participants had during the therapy programme. The focus group will last for approximately 60 minutes and will be held in the third week after the intervention at the residential institution and/or house of safety.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential risks and discomforts foreseen are:

- Since research will be conducted in an outdoor setting, the intervention (therapy sessions) may be cancelled due to unruly weather
- If for whatever reason your child may find any of the interview questions embarrassing or offensive, the participant may choose not to answer them. It should be noted that the answers to the questionnaires are confidential and will be treated accordingly
- The participants or researcher being absent due to health issues

In the above mentioned scenarios, therapy sessions will be rescheduled according to the policies and procedures applied by the EAL intervention provider (s).

The psychological risks foreseen include re-activation of traumatic memories, which may cause discomfort and in a worst case lead to re-traumatization. The services of the following mental health professional will be made available in case of any emergency:

- Mr [REDACTED], Counselling Psychologist
[REDACTED]

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Undertaking the proposed study will make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge base of psychology with regard to exploring adolescents in street situations' experience of Equine Assisted Learning and the meaning they construct around their experience of the intervention.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your child will receive no remuneration of any nature for taking part in the study. Additionally the study procedures will be conducted at no cost to the participants and/or residential institution provider.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing pseudonyms to conceal his/her identity.

Research information (raw data) will be made available to the study's Supervisor (Dr L Dreyer) who oversees the research process. Both the individual interviews and focus group interviews will be taped with a digital recorder, with your child's permission. He/she has the right to review/ edit the tapes or any information they provide during the interviews. The audiotapes will be solely used for research purposes and will be kept in a locked container for 5 years. Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, his/her name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed.

Furthermore, any data obtained from your child will be safeguarded and kept in a locked container. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the container. Any information in electronic format will be stored on a password protected computer of which only the researcher has access to. Your child will additionally be asked if he/she would be willing to be contacted at a later date in case a need to clarify any of your responses given during the interviews. This would involve obtaining his/her name, address, and phone number, and the name of another contact person in case he/she moves or their phone number changes.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this study is voluntary. *Your child could choose to take part in the EAL programme, but not participate in the research.* If he/she volunteers to be in this study, he/she may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. He/she may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant Doing so. This being:

- When he/she become a threat to the well-being of him/herself and/or others for example demonstrating aggressive behaviour, emotional or verbal abuse.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the research investigator, Louise Fischer (+2783 232 3263) and/or the research study supervisor, Dr L. Dreyer (+27 808 3502). The research team may also be contacted via email: Louise Fischer (fishilouise@gmail.com) or Dr L. Dreyer (lornadreyer@sun.ac.za).

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent as a parent/ guardian 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/the subject/the participant*] by the research investigator, Louise Fischer in Afrikaans and/or English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is*] 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/his/her*] satisfaction.

I hereby consent that my child may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Parent/ Guardian

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Parent/Guardian/ Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

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

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F**PARTICIPANT ASSENT/CONSENT LETTER****PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM****TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Learning.

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Miss Louise Fischer

ADDRESS:



CONTACT NUMBER:

Mobile number: 083 23 23 263

What is RESEARCH?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease, difficulties and/or problems individuals experience. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick or need support with difficulties/ problems they face in life.

What is this research project all about?

This study is about exploring adolescents' experience of participating in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme and the meaning they give to their experiences.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

- You are a teenager/ adolescent (between the age of 12-18 years)
- You are participating in a three week Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Programme, consisting of six sessions.

Description of the Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Programme

The programme currently provided aims to reduce negative behaviours by increase life skills as well as promote the mental health of individuals according to their developmental and educational needs. These include:

- Week 1 (Session 1): Orientation/ Trust
- Week 1 (Session 2): Self-Awareness and Relationship Building
- Week 2 (Session 1): Communication
- Week 2 (Session 2): Problem-solving
- Week 3 (Session 1): Responsibility
- Week 3 (Session 2): Self-confidence and Motivation

The dates for the EAL programme are:

- Friday 17 May 2013 (2 - 3pm)
- Saturday 18 May 2013 (11 - 12am)
- Monday 20 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- Monday 27 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- Wednesday 29 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)
- Thursday 30 May 2013 (1 - 2pm)

Who is doing the research?

I, Louise Fischer will be conducting this research investigation in order to complete a thesis and obtain a degree in M.Ed. Educational Psychology from the Stellenbosch University.

I will be supervised by Dr. L. M. Dreyer from the department of Educational Psychology (Stellenbosch University).

What will happen to me in this study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you would be asked to do:

- *Picture Collage*

You will be asked to create a collage using pictures from magazines to visually illustrate your experience of taking part in the EAL programme. I, the researcher, will ask you questions and discuss the collage with you once you have finished. The collage activity and discussion will take approximately 40 minutes and will be done the week after the EAL intervention programme is completed. The collage activity will likewise take place at the residential institution and/or house of safety.

- *Individual interviews*

An interview of approximately 60 minute will be held with you at the residential institution and/or house of safety, two weeks after the EAL programme. The interview will be held to explore your experience of the programme and the meaning it has for you as a person.

- *Focus group interviews*

After the interview, you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview with other adolescents who participated in the same EAL programme. In the focus group topics that will be discussed, include experiences you and the other participants had and shared during the equine assisted learning programme. The focus group will last for approximately 60 minutes and will be held during the third week, after the intervention, at the residential institution and/or house of safety.

Can anything bad happen to me?

The potential risks and discomforts foreseen in this study are:

- The therapy sessions may be cancelled due to unruly weather since research will be conducted in an outdoor setting*
- You as the participant may be absent from the therapy sessions due to health and/ or other issues*

- It is very important that you should inform your parents/ guardian if you are sick, in pain or feel uncomfortable as a result of being in the study.

*In the above mentioned scenarios, therapy sessions will be rescheduled according to the policies and procedures applied by the intervention providers.

- You may experience discomfort during interview sessions as you speak about your experience of the EAL programme. These feelings may include sadness, aggression and/or anxiety. Possible traumatic memories of the past events, may surface during the interview. Therefore, the services of a psychologist will be made available in such a situation.
- Mr [REDACTED], Counselling Psychologist
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Can anything good happen to me?

- Taking part in this study will assist/ help the researcher to gain greater knowledge and insight into how adolescents experience the process of taking part in an Equine Assisted Learning programme.
- Sharing your experiences will serve as a source of valuable information for future research studies.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

- Any information that is obtained from you **will remain confidential** (private) and will only be disclosed (revealed) with **your** permission or as required by law.
- A fictitious name will be used to conceal your identity.
- The research information will only be made available to the study's Supervisor (Dr L Dreyer) who oversees the research process.
- Both your individual interviews and focus group interviews will be taped using a digital recorder with your permission which will be available to be reviewed and/or edited by you.
- Information gathered in this research study may be published or presented in public forums; however, your name or other identifying information will not be used or revealed.
- Any information obtained from you will be safeguarded and kept in a locked container.
- Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the container.



Who can I talk to about the study?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

- Louise Fischer at [fishilouise@gmail.com] the principal investigator
- Dr L. Dreyer [lornadreyer@sun.ac.za] the supervisor assigned to the study
- If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

What if I do not want to do this?

It is exclusively your choice to participate in the study. You could choose to take part in the EAL programme, but not participate in the research investigation. **NO** person is forcing you to decide to participate in the study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw **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.

Just note that the investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise in which you become a threat to the well-being of yourself and/or others for example being aggressive, exposing others to any emotional or verbal abuse etc.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

 YES NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

 YES NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

 YES NO

.....
Name of Child

.....
Signature of Child

.....
Date

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Study Title: The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Learning.

Principal Researcher: Louise Fischer

Institution: Stellenbosch University

Department: Educational Psychology

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The primary purpose of this investigation is to explore adolescents (ages 12-18) in residential care's experience of taking part in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme. I am interested in understanding your experience of the EAL programme and the meaning or significance the programme may have had for you. You may share any thoughts, feelings or ideas that you may feel comfortable to talk about. Feel free to talk about whatever comes to mind after I have asked you a question. If you prefer to not answer a specific question, just say "pass" when the question is asked.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 Age:
- 1.2 Gender:
- 1.3 Grade:
- 1.4 Where were you born and raised:
- 1.5 Do you live with parents/family/ guardian?
Please tell me a more about your 'home' ...

2. Experience of the programme

- 2.1 Describe your experience of taking part in the EAL programme?
- 2.2 What did you enjoy about it?
- 2.3 What was less enjoyable? Why do you say so?

3. Meaning constructed from their experiences

- 3.1 What are your thoughts on the experience/ process?
- 3.2 How would you describe your emotions and/or feelings after the intervention?

4. Significance of the programme

- 4.1 Would you say it is important to take part in this programme? If yes, why do you say so?
- 4.2 Name any benefits the experience had for you as a person?

5. How this experience may possibly influence relationships with self

- 5.1 In what way did the EAL experience teach you about yourself or the world around you?

6. Future outlook

6.1 How did this experience influence your perspective and outlook of the future?

Examples of probing questions include:

- (a) Can you give me an example ...?
- (b) Can you please tell me more about ...?
- (c) This is what I thought I heard ... did I understand correctly?
- (d) What makes you feel/ think/ behave in that way ...?

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Study Title: The experiences of adolescents in residential care participating in Equine Assisted Learning.

Principal Researcher: Louise Fischer

Institution: Stellenbosch University

Department: Educational Psychology

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The primary purpose of this investigation is to explore adolescents (ages 12-18) in residential care's experience of taking part in an Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) programme. I am interested in understanding your experience of the EAL programme and the meaning or significance the programme may have had for you as a group. You may share any thoughts, feelings or ideas that you may feel comfortable to talk about in front of your peers. Feel free to talk about whatever comes to mind after I have asked you a question or when a topic is discussed. If you prefer to not answer a specific question or take part in any discussion, just say "pass" when the information is presented.

1. Experience of the programme

- 1.1 Describe your experience when you first heard about taking part in an EAL programme?
- 1.2 What did you enjoy about it?
- 1.3 What was less enjoyable? Why do you say so?
- 1.4 Would you consider taking part in such an EAL programme in the future?
- 1.5 Tell me more about your experiences with regard to the horses listening to you and DOing what you ask them to do?

2. Meaning constructed from their experiences

- 2.1 What are your thoughts and feelings on the experience/ process after the sessions?
- 2.2 How would you describe your interaction with the other participants while working in a group?
What was enjoyable or less enjoyable about the group experience?
- 2.3 Tell me more about your communication with the horses. How would you describe this experience?

3. Significance of the programme

- 3.1 Would you say it is important to take part in this programme? If yes, why do you say so?
- 3.2 Did you share your experience of the EAL programme with others? If yes, with whom?

4. How this experience may possibly influence relationships with self

- 4.1 What did this EAL experience teach you about yourself/ What did you learn from this experience?

5. Future outlook

5.1 How did this experience influence your outlook of the future/ future goals?

Examples of probing questions include:

- (a) Can you give me an example ...?
- (b) Can you please tell me more about ...?
- (c) This is what I thought I heard ... did I understand correctly?
- (d) What makes you feel/ think/ behave in that way ...?

APPENDIX I

SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

(An excerpt from the interview transcript which was conducted in Afrikaans)

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
R:	Introduction to research and process of individual interviews			
R:	"Julle het so 'n paar weke terug aan 'n program deelgeneem waar jy en 'n paar ander jong mense gaan werk het met perde. Julle het elkeen ook 'n collage gemaak oor jou ervaring van die van die sessies. Sal jy graag met my deel wat jy gedoen het..."			
P2:	"Ja tannie ... die eeste dag toe ons daar gekom het tannie en was ook so 'n groot ervaring want dit was my eerste keer dat ek saam met perde en eerste keer dat ek ook perde voel en dat ek sien perde in sulke hokke is en ek het altyd gedink perde loop net op gras en hulle slaap nie in hokke en so nie dit was net 'n groot ervaring ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Groot ervaring</i> • <i>Eerste keer saam met perde/ perde voel</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the programme • Novel experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of EAL programme
R:	"Ja ..."			
P2:	"Die eerste aktiwiteit doen, ons moet eers die perde te vryf en borsel met die borseltjies en vir hulle vryf en borsel en ek was eers 'n bietjie bang en maar toe agterna toe het ek begin vir hulle geborsel die perde, daar was 5 perde wat uitgekome het en ons moet die perde 'n naam gegee het en ek het nog nie die perd 'n naam gegee nie, maar agterna toe ek het hom 'n naam gegee. Stukkels het ek hom genoem ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Die perde vryf en borsel</i> • <i>Ek was eers 'n bietjie bang maar agterna toe het ek begin vir hulle borsel</i> • <i>Ek het hom 'n naam gegee</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturance • Self-esteem • Identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Emotional welfare • Attachment
R:	"Stukkels, ja ..."			
P2:	"Ja en toe vir hulle geborsel en so het ons healtyd vir hulle geborsel, kos en water gee en toe agterna toe roep die tannies weer vir ons en toe en toe sê hulle at ons moet die perde ons moet 'n tou omsit om hulle koppe en so-aan en dan moet ons vir hulle lei en trek en om die cones te gaan ... hulle [terapeute] nie gehelp nie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Geborsel, kos en water gegee</i> • <i>Hulle nie gehelp nie</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturance • Problem-solving • Independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Skills • Psychological Welfare
R:	"Ja ..."			

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
P2:	"... en dit was net lekker en agterna toe die next dag het ons ook daarna toe gegaan en ek het net begin gehou van die perde en dit was lekker en agterna het ek weer by al 5 en toe, van die ander meisies hulle was 'n bietjie bang vir die perde ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>En dit was net lekker</i> • <i>Ek het net begin hou van die perde</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable experience • Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the programme • Attachment
R:	"... wat het verder gebeur?"			
P2:	"... en hulle toe wanneer hulle [deelnemers] hardloop na die perde toe en dan hardloop die perde weg die perde is 'n bietjie te bang van hulle [deelnemers] is wild en ek het net stadig na die perde toe geloop en ek het na van elk van hulle toe gegaan en ek het vir hulle gevrywe en ek het vir hulle almal en so hulle almal het van my gehou en dit was net lekker tannie en ja en toe sê hulle weer ons moet die perde ons ek en die meisies moet ons moet nou in 'n groep werk en dan moet ons die perde een perd vat en hom om te draai toe met die toue en vir hom lei ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Die perde is 'n bietjie te bang</i> • <i>Hulle almal het van my gehou</i> • <i>En dit was net lekker</i> • <i>In 'n groep werk</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Connection • Positive experience • Social interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare • Attachment • Experience of the programme • Social competence • Problem-solving
R:	"Uhhmm ..."			
P2:	"... en so en toe het ons hom gelei om die cones weer en toe sê hulle en toe roep hulle ons weer en toe sê hulle [terapeute] "mooi" ons het dit gedoen en toe sê hulle weer ons moet sonder die toue en toe en dit was ook in 'n groep en so moet ons die perd lei en toe was hulle [deelnemers] bang hulle wil nie saamgewerk het nie, die meisies en toe sê ek vir hulle kom julle moet saam werk toe het ons eers aan hom gevrywe en ek het toe aan hom gevrywe en so het ek gesê "kom kom" en ek weet ook nie as ek praat saam met hom [perd] dan luister het ek gepraat saam met hom het ek gepraat saam met die perde en toe het so geloop stadig geloop en toe het ons ook agterna geloop en dit was net lekker het nie om die cones gegaan nie en toe sê hulle vir ons "well done dis goed lat julle dit doen so" en toe moes ons elk van ons 'n perd net lei ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Toe sê hulle mooi ons het dit gedoen</i> • <i>Dit was ook in 'n groep; hulle wou nie saamgewerk het nie</i> • <i>Toe sê ek vir hulle kom julle moet saamwerk</i> • <i>Ek praat saam met hom</i> • <i>Dit was net lekker</i> • <i>Toe sê hulle vir ons well done, dis goed dat julle dit doen so</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement • Social interaction • Encouragement • Verbal communication • Positive experience • Acknowledgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological welfare • Social competence • Psychological welfare • Communication • Experience of the programme • Psychological welfare

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
R:	"Ja ..."			
P2:	"... en toe het ek eerste en toe het ek eers lekker aan hom gevrywe en agterna sê hulle weer ons moet om die perd stap en toe en toe het ek om die perd gestap en hom gevrywe en hy weet ek is hierso die perd, dit was 'n silwer ene daardie een [perd] was myne, die een Stukkels, was myne gewees en toe het ek aan hom gevryf en toe het ek nou so om hom geloop en dit was baie lekker en hy het ook 'n sagte vel en toe het ek hom gelei en hy het gekom na my toe van, hy't ook gehou van my en dit was baie lekker tannie en hy het om die cones gegaan toe en toe sê hulle dat ek is goed, ekke weet hoe om 'n perd te werk, toe het die meisies, maar hulle was 'n bietjie te bang en hulle het nie geluister nie, en toe sê hulle hulle moet maar los want hulle was bang hulle, die perde wil nie gekom het nie dan hardloop die perd sommer weg en so-aan ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hy weet ek is hierso, die perd</i> • <i>Daardie een was myne; was myne gewees</i> • <i>Dit was baie lekker</i> • <i>Hy het gekom na my toe; hy't ook gehou van my</i> • <i>Toe sê hulle dat ek is goed, eke weet hoe om 'n perd te werk</i> • <i>Hulle was bang</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Identity • Positive experience • Connection • Acknowledgement/Praise • Awareness of others' emotions/Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare • Attachment • Experience of the programme • Trust • Psychological welfare • Emotional Welfare
R:	"... en daarna ..."			
P2:	"... en toe roep hulle vir ons weer en toe sulke cones weer en 'n stok daarso op sit en ons almal laat die perd oor jump oor gaan met die toue en toe het ons die die tou gooi en toe wil die perd nie kom nie van hulle was 'n bietjie te hard hulle het die perd bang gemaak en so-aan en toe sê ek hulle moet nie so wild is nie hulle moet sag werk en hulle moenie so hard is met die perd nie want die perd is ook so hy raak ook 'n bietjie bang en so om te vrees en so en toe het hulle begin hulle het begin stadig iemand het vir hulle gesê hulle moet vryf aan die perd en so het die perd begin stap en van hulle het ook agter geloop en toe mekaar se hande gehou en toe het hulle gesien die perd kom en toe loop hy en toe, hy wou oor gaan maar dan stop hy weer en so het ons hom weer gevrywe en toe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ons almal laat die perd jump/oor gaan</i> • <i>Van hulle was bietjie te hard, hulle het die perd bang gemaak en toe sê ek hulle moet nie so wild wees nie</i> • <i>Vir hulle gesê hulle moet vryf aan die perd</i> • <i>Toe sê ek vir hom kom kom</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success • Guidance • Non-verbal communication • Verbal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological welfare • Psychological welfare • Communication • Communication

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
	agterna toe loop hy weer en toe stap ek voor en toe se ek vir hom "kom kom" en toe ons die tou gooi toe kom hy oor met die met die tou oorgekom daarso, dis baie lekker tannie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dis baie lekker</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the programme
R:	"En die ander aktiwiteite wat julle nog gedoen het?"			
P2:	"... en so het ons gespeel en ons het saamgewerk dan was dit 'n tou wat ons gegooi het en ons almal daarop staan met die perde en dan moes die perd moet die perd oor klim maar ons het saamgewerk en agterna toe ons toe ons moet nie op die water trap want as ons op die water trap dan gaan ons insink en so en toe het die perd gekom en het gesê hulle moet stap en toe is hulle almal oral oor die water met hulle goed met hulle treasures en so-aan en toe het ek met die tou en dis toe dat ek met tou dan moet ek vorentoe sê "kom kom" dan wil die perd nie kom nie en dan vryf ek weer onder hom en dan kom hy al stadiger dan stap hy en dit was baie lekker tannie toe ons dit met perde gespeel en dan stoot ek weer die tou ek was amper daarso oor en toe kom die perd en toe is ek oor daarso en toe klap hulle hande vir ons want ons het ook saamgewerk en so-aan ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gespeel en saamgewerk</i> • <i>Dan sê ek kom kom; vryf ek weer onder hom en dan kom hy al stadiger dan stap hy</i> • <i>Dit was baie lekker</i> • <i>Toe klap hulle hande vir ons want ons het ook saamgewerk</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction • Verbal and non-verbal communication • Positive Experience • Acknowledgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social competence • Communication • Experience of the programme • Psychological welfare
R:	"Uhhh en hoe het dit gevoel?"			
P2:	"... dit was baie lekker het gevoel dat die perde hy luister vir ons en so ja dis [perd] partykeers net bang maar ons moet sag net weet hoe om te werk en so-aan ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lekker gevoel toe die perde luister vir ons</i> • <i>Dis [perd] net bang maar ons moet sag werk</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-empowerment • Self-esteem • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare
R:	"Ja en toe julle nou gehoor het julle gaan met perde werk, wat het jy gedink gaan gebeur?"			
P2:	"Ek het gedink ons gaan miskien op die perde klim of so ... Maar toe is dit nie so nie ... toe sê hulle dat ons gaan aktiwiteite het en ek het nie geweet watter aktiwiteite nou maar ek was opgewonde en so-aan en dit was baie lekker en dit was ook my eerste dat ek saam met perde te	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ek was opgewonde en so-aan en dit was baie lekker</i> • <i>Dit was my eerste dat ek</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasurable anticipation • Positive experience • Novel experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare • Experience of the programme • Psychological welfare

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
	<p>gewerk het en so-aan maar nou weet ek ek hoef nie bang te wees nie en 'n mens moenie te hard wees nie en te hardloop na die perd toe nie, jy hardloop na die perd toe dan gaan die perd weg hardloop jy moet saggies na hom toe kom en dan gaat hy nie bang wees nie en dan moet jy aan hom vryf en so-aan, maar nou weet ek ook hoe om na die perd toe aan te raak want die perde hulle raak ook bang en dan hardloop hulle en so-aan nou weet ek dan en na die eerste toe ek aanvaar het dat ek wil ook eendag op 'n perd ook klim en saam met hom ry ..."</p>	<p><i>saam met perde te gewerk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nou weet ek, ek hoef nie bang te wees nie</i> • <i>Maar nou weet ek ook hoe om na die perd toe aan te raak</i> • <i>Perde hulle raak ook bang en dan hardloop hulle</i> • <i>Ek wil ook eendag op 'n perd ook klim en saam met hom ry</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Awareness • Empathy • Aspirations/ future goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare • Knowledge • Emotional welfare • Future possibilities
R:	"Goed so na die sessies ... wat het jy toe gedink?"			
P2:	<p>"... ek het gedink dis baie lekker en dat om so saam met perde en ja tannie en toe ons klaar gewees toe sê hulle vir ons ervaring hoe wat was dit gewees en toe sê ek dis baie lekker om saam met perde te werk en om perde te vryf en te borsel en hulle is so swaar en sterk perde en hulle is baie sterk en elkeen het sy bene en dan voel ek so sy bene en dis net sterk ... en toe vir hulle [deelnemers] gesê dit is baie lekker om saam met perde te kan werk ... dis ook 'n droom om op 'n perd te klim ..."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dis baie lekker om saam met perde te werk, vryf</i> • <i>Hulle is swaar, sterk</i> • <i>Droom om op 'n perd te klim</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experience • Observation • Future goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the programme • Knowledge • Skills • Future Possibilities

APPENDIX J

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

(An excerpt from the focus group interview which was conducted in Afrikaans)

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
R:	"Met julle individuele onderhoude het julle genoem dat julle geleer het tydens die sessies ..."			
P1:	"Ek het alles geweet ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ek het alles geweet</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Welfare
R:	"So vertel vir my wat het vir jou uitgestaan... wat dink jy is die dinge wat jy geleer het?"			
P2:	"Om nie meer bang te wees, ek was bang ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Om nie meer bang te wees nie, ek was bang</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare
P3:	"Jy moet nie wys vir die perd jy's bang vir hom nie anders is die perd ook bang vir jou. 'n Perd is amper soos 'n mens mens kan amper sê hulle is dieselfde maar 'n perd kan mos net nie praat nie.."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moet nie wys vir die perd jy's bang vir hom nie anders is die perd ook bang vir jou</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge
R:	"En vir jou Kim?"			
P1:	"Ek het sê maar ek auntie ... was daar nou gewees en toe loop ek mos die heelyd so met die perd, toe loop ek heelyd maar ek het nie gesien daardie perd gaan so maak nie ... toe loop ek die heelyd, die heelyd geloop met die perd maar nou almal, hulle staan nou daardie kant toe [sy wys na die agterkant van perd op die prent] toe het die perd amper amper so geskop maar hy like miskien nie dat ek moet die heelyd so om hom loop nie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hy like miskien nie dat ek moet die heelyd so om hom loop nie</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare
R:	"Wat sal jy doen volgende keer?"			
P1:	"... dalk net 'n bietjie meer te kyk eers of die perd eers te leer ken en dan te doen ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dalk net 'n bietjie meer te kyk, eers die perd te leer ken en dan te doen</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Skills
R:	"Sal 'n mens dit wat jy daar geleer het in jou eie lewe kan doen?"			
P2:	"Ja, die perd of iets anders is ook dieselfde.. soos mense soos diere soos ... mens hoof nie bang te wees nie en mooi werk met ander ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mens hoof nie bang te wees;</i> • <i>Mooi werk met ander</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional welfare • Knowledge

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
R:	"Goed so as julle weer die geleentheid kry, sal jy graag weer aan so 'n program wil deelneem?"			
P3:	"Ja."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ja</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in EAL programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Possibilities
R:	"Jaydene, vertel vir my 'n bietjie meer?"			
P3:	"Dit was baie lekker. Ek hou daarvan om met die perd mee te speel [...] om die perd 'n hug te gee."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dit [ervaring] was baie lekker;</i> • <i>Om met die perd te speel; die perd</i> • <i>'n Hug te gee</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of programme • Social interaction • Affection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall experience of the programme • Social competence • Trust
R:	"Om 'n 'hug' te gee was dit vir jou baie lekker?"			
P3:	"... ja en die perde is vol modder en moet ons skoon maak... was goed vir my... die perd se hare ... die perd lekker was so"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was goed vir my</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation was uplifting experience for the participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological welfare
P2:	"... van as ek ek sal weer so 'n kans kry ... ek sal weer gaan ek het ook 'n klomp goed ervaar en ek is ook baie lief vir perde"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>As ek weer so 'n kans kry sal ek weer gaan;</i> • <i>Klop goed ervaar;</i> • <i>Baie lief vir perde</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experience of programme • Affection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall experience of the programme • Trust
P3:	"En ek het baie dinge oor die perd geleer, baie goete ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Baie dinge oor perd geleer, baie goete</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge
R:	"Superboy, jou ervaringe wat jy sê wat so baie was?"			
P2:	"Tannie ... dink dis baie ... nie nou woorde daarvoor nie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dink dis (ervaring van program) baie ... nie nou woorde daarvoor nie</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the EAL Programme
P3:	"Dit was lekker om die perd te speel en te kos te gee en water ... om agter die perd te kyk was goed ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lekker om met die perd te speel;</i> • <i>Agter die perd te kyk was goed</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction • Nurturance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social competence • Attachment
R:	"Dankie daarvoor ... volgende."			
P2:	"Ja tannie. Perde hulle is rereg groot want dit is groot perde en perde is groot en ek ervaar die eerste dag die perde geborsel het en so-aan en ek het altyd die perd gevryf sy bene en	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Perde is rereg groot;</i> • <i>Perde is sterk;</i> • <i>Het hom gevryf en dit</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Nurturance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Skills • Attachment

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
	hy is rereg sterk, perde is sterk ook en hulle hou ook van hardloop en dit was net lekker hoe perde hardloop agtermekaar en aan my hardloop en ek like ook so met die tou saam met hom geloop het is ook lekker en het hom gevryf ook en dit was baie lekker en so het ek ook lief geraak vir die perde vir almal van hulle ek het ook lief geraak vir almal van hulle en altyd en hulle so deur gaan met die cones en so dan kom die perd en vryf die cones dit was net lekker vir my tannie en die laaste dag toe het ons so oor die water gegaan het met die perd en dit was ook baie lekker en ek het die perd vasgehou en hulle almal was al oor al en toe sê ek vir die perd "kom kom" maar die perd dink ook goed en so en hy raak ook 'n bietjie bang en hy was ook honger partykeers en so toe, het ek hom gevryf en so en toe was hulle almal oor en toe ek die tou en toe gaan ek oor toe kom hy en toe is ons almal oor en toe en dit was net goed gewees tannie en toe ons klaar is dan kom die perde na ons toe en dan maak hy met sy kop hierso [wys na bors] en vryf hy jou so en hy is ook lief vir ons en dis baie lekker	<p><i>was baie lekker;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Het ek ook lief geraak vir die perde;</i> • <i>Lief geraak vir almal van hulle;</i> • <i>Toe sê ek vir die perd "kom kom";</i> • <i>Toe is ons almal oor en dit was net goed gewees.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Love • Verbal communication • Experience success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Trust • Communication • Psychological welfare
R:	"Dankie ..."			
P1:	"Nou gaan ons nooit die perde weer sien nie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gaan ons nooit die perde weer sien nie</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment
P3:	"Ek hou van die perde ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ek hou van die perde</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fondness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment
R:	"Ja ...?"			
P1:	"Ek mis almal die perde ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ek mis almal die perde</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment
R:	"Lyk my jy skud jou kop Nicole...stem jy saam?"			
P4:	[Nicole maak oogkontak en skuld haar kop op en af]			
P1:	Maar ek mis daardie perde ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ek mis daardie perde</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment
R:	"En hoe was dit verder vir jou Nicole?"			
	[Geen response van deelnemer]			
P2:	"Ja, hoe was dit vir jou Nicole?"			
R:	"Dis reg ... sy hoef nie te antwoord			

	VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT	COMMENTS	CODES	CATEGORY
	as sy nie wil nie "			
P1:	"Sy [Nicole] was eers baie bang vir 'n perd ... sy wil nie naby die perd gaan nie."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was eers bang</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Welfare
R:	"So met die eerste kontak met die perde was sy [Nicole] bang? ..."			
P3:	"Maar die eerste was ek ook bang vir 'n perd maar nou is ek gewoon aan dit ... nie soos ek was nie ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was ek ook bang vir 'n perd maar nou is ek gewoon aan dit</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Welfare
R:	"So met die tyd het die kontak met die perde beter geraak. Wat het verander?"			
P2:	"Of hy [perd] het begin lief geraak vir jou of hy het jou verstaan en toe ook geluister en so ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Begin lief raak vir jou;</i> • <i>Hy het jou verstaan en toe ook geluister</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affection • Self-empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Attachment • Psychological welfare
R:	"Jy noem dat die perd lief geraak het vir jou ... hoe het die perd vir jou gewys?"			
P3:	"Hy het na my toe gekom ... wou by my wees ... en as jy hom miskien so 'n drukkies gee"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hy het na my toe gekom ... wou by my wees</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Trust
R:	"Ja ..."			
P2:	"En wanneer hulle vir ons roep en dan as ons vir die perde los dan kom hulle sommer agter ons aan van self ..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dan kom hulle [perde] sommer agter ons aan van self</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust
R:	"So as julle weg stap dan stap die perde ook agterna ...?"			
P2:	"Ja ... was baie lekker".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was baie lekker</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the programme

APPENDIX K

EXAMPLES OF COLLAGES OF PARTICIPANTS 2 AND 3



APPENDIX L

**AUDIT TRAIL OF THE STEPS TAKEN
DURING THE RESEARCH INVESTIGATION**

DATE	PURPOSE	VENUE	INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED	OUTCOME
November 2012	Applied for ethical clearance	Stellenbosch University	Research and Ethics Committee	Permission granted on 26 April 2013
February/March 2013	Negotiating access to EAL intervention services	Cape Town	██████████ and ██████████	EAL services obtained beginning of March 2013
April 2013	Negotiating access to the residential care institution	Residential Care Institution (Western Cape)	Board of directors and the manager of the institution	Permission granted on the 9 th of May 2013
10 April 2013	Contact with participants and their custodians	Residential Care Institution (Western Cape)	Participants and custodians	Obtained both participants and custodian consent
17 May 2013 – 30 May 2013	Duration of the EAL intervention	Venue in the Western Cape	Intervention providers and participants	Five (60 minute) programme session were attended
June 2013	Data collection: collages	Office at the residential care institution (Western Cape)	Five participants	Gathered data
June 2013	Data collection: Semi-structured individual interview	Office at the residential care institution (Western Cape)	Four participants	Gathered data
June 2013	Data collection: Focus group interview	Office at the residential care institution (Western Cape)	Four participants	Gathered data
June 2013	Individual within case analysis	Stellenbosch	Researcher	Completed
June/July 2013	Cross case analysis	Stellenbosch	Researcher	Completed
July 2013	Interpretation of research data	Stellenbosch	Researcher	Completed
July 2013	Conceptualisation of the research data	Stellenbosch	Researcher	Completed