Equine assisted social work as a mean for authentic relations between clients and staff

Catharina Carlsson[1], Daniel Nilsson Ranta[2], & Bente Traeen[3]

[1] Department of Social Work, Linnaeus University, Kalmar, Sweden
[2] Department of Social Work, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden
[3] Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

The purpose of this study was to explore, by qualitative methods, the meaning of equine-assisted social work (EASW) both to young women with self-harm problems and their staff in residential treatment. Data were collected by in-depth interviews with eight staff members and nine clients. Human-horse interaction was observed subsequently in three of the staff and four of the clients. Based on the narratives of the staff members and the clients, who agreed, the horse's ability to read human emotions made the staff and clients aware of their own emotions. In order not to alienate the horse or make the situation dangerous, which intensified their sense of being in the present, both the clients and staff had to regulate their emotions. As a result the resistance for change decreased, made the participants more likely to regulate their emotions and change behavior rather than avoid the situation or the information. The horse seemed to set the framework for the interaction between the staff and young women. The fact that even the staff could fail in the interaction with the horse, affected the interaction between staff and clients making it more informal and dynamic. A relationship based on empathy, trust, respect and negotiation, where clients shared private matters, resulted in the perception of a more authentic relationship. Further research is needed to see which conditions are favourable for achieving an authentic relationship and which conditions possibly fail.

Keywords: equine-assisted social work, mirror of emotions, be in the presence, emotional awareness and regulation, authentic relationship

Direct correspondence to: Catharina Carlsson, Linnaeus University, Department of Social work, 391 82 Kalmar Sweden, e-mail: catharina.carlsson@lnu.se, Phone: +46480446116 direct +46709489004 mobile

Introduction

Social work practice is interactive and process-oriented. Social workers treat problems by building therapeutic relations and identifying needs, goals, and resources that unfold over time, representing unique combinations for every client (Adams, LeCroy, & Matto, 2009). Even so, clients and social workers may disagree on the cause of a problem as well as on the choice of treatment (Nevonen & Broberg, 2000), adding to the complexity of the work. Introducing a horse as part of treatment may seem to make social work even more complex. Previous research (Bizub, Joy & Davidson, 2003; Bower & MacDonald, 2011; Burgon, 2011; Holmes, Goodwin, Redhead & Goymour, 2011; Macauley & Guitierrez, 2004; Rothe, Vega, Torres Campos Soler & Molina Pazos, 2005; Rothe, 2005; Smith-Osborne & Selby, 2010) defines this type of work with horses as different although the way the staff work and what clients they emphasize seem to overlap. This provokes the question: are there differences in the essence of what the staff, clients and the horses do? To find out, this

paper therefore asks what the horse's role might be in a treatment context?

In the first place there is evidence that *Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy* seems to facilitate the restoration of trust and building relationships between staff members and their clients (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Foley, 2008). In this context, it becomes pertinent to highlight that professional skills also affect the possibilities of establishing a relationship with the client (Hasenfeld, 2010). The discretion of the staff also varies, for example in a bureaucratic organisation, the work may contain elements of incitement, intimidation and persuasion. The reverse could be defined as emotional labour were the work is based on establishing trust and thereby motivate the client (Guy, Newman, Mastracci, & Maynard-Moody, 2010).

If we return to research about horses in care, generally, there are indications that this kind of therapy is associated with restoring the client's self-esteem and self-image. It also seems to develop communication skills, emotional awareness, and regulation, as well as reducing anxiety (Beck & Katcher, 2003; Bizub, Joy, & Davidson, 2003; Dell, Chalmers, Dell, Sauve, & MacKinnon, 2008; Dell et al., 2011; Gress, 2003; Holmes, Goodwin, Redhead, & Goymour, 2011; Kaiser, Spence, Lavergne, & Vanden Bosch, 2004; Karol, 2007; Macauley & Guitierrez, 2004; Rothe, Vega, Torres, Campos Soler, & Molina Pazos, 2005; Vidrin, Owen-Smith, & Faulkner, 2002; Walsh, 2009; William, 2005; Yorke, Adams, & Coady, 2008). These outcomes indicate that Equine Assisted Social Work (EASW) may be fruitful for the particular client groups in the present study, namely, young women with eating disorders, self-injury problems and tendencies to suicidal behavior.

Moving back to the field of social work, there is lack of research on treatment methods and the effects of treatment. Much of the work carried out in institutions does not build on existing theories or models (Andreassen, 2003; Sallnäs, 2000). One variation of treatment that

has emerged in recent years, includes horses (Statens offentliga utredningar SOU 2000:109). In Sweden today, nearly twenty organisation units are using horses in treatment and care, and most of these are under private management (Håkansson, Karlsson Palmgren, & Sandgren, 2008). The research about the horse's role for staff and clients is very limited, and more research is needed to establish whether EASW can be defined as a separate method or a tool.

Considering aspects of definition, we know that the horse serves different purposes for people, and is given different meanings in different contexts. Some claim that the horse is a partner or a friend, whereas others state that the horse is a tool, a master, a motivational factor, or a mirror (Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, & Bowers, 2007; Klontz, Bivens, Leinart, & Klontz, 2007; Vidrine et al., 2002). Norwegian therapists involved in horse-assisted therapeutic interventions for clients with prolonged, severe eating disorders conclude that the horse provides the clients with an opportunity to experience intimacy in the relationship, and to train their relational skills in a clear, effective and less threatening way (Træen, Moan, & Rosenvinge, 2012). The staff believes that dealing with the horse increases the clients' awareness of their own and others' emotional reactions, body language, and intentions. However, that particular study did not interview the clients themselves. The present study takes the experience of the Norwegian therapists one step further and explores the role of the horse in a social-work-treatment setting, as experienced by both clients with eating disorders, other self-harm problems and staff members on the premises.

Equine Assisted Social Work and Therapy

To begin with, horses are flight animals. They relate to the environment they live in as well as to the emotional status of the humans they interact with (Ekesbo, 2011). In the wild, a horse's survival depends on its ability to sense fear and to interpret other animals'

intentions as expressed in body language and pheromones. Accordingly, the horse's survival lies in the knowledge of recognizing other horses' emotions as well as those of other species, including humans (Ekesbo, 2011). Studies show that when a person has negative feelings towards a horse, the horse's heart rate increases. A person with neutral or positive feelings toward the horse does not affect the horse's heart rate. An individual's attitude toward the horse affects the behavior of the horse (Chamove, Crawley-Hatrick, & Stafford, 2002; Hama, Yogo, & Matsuyama, 1996; Henry, Hemery, Richard, & Hausberger, 2005). The horse's sensitivity to emotions could make it suitable for use in working with specific groups of clients.

EASW represents an alternative or a supplement to conventional treatment and social work and involves a triangular relationship between staff, client, and horse. EASW is sometimes inaccurately called "riding therapy." The primary emphasis in EASW is not riding as in therapeutic riding for the disabled. The activities in EASW can involve care of the horse, training with the horse, riding, carriage driving, and vaulting (gymnastics on horseback), similar to other equine assisted interventions. A possible difference could be that in EASW there is no manual or program to follow. Instead, the work will always depend on the staff's skills and educational backgrounds, the horse's abilities, and the client's skills and wishes.

Only recently researchers have begun to focus on the mechanisms involved in the horse-human interaction where the horse assists therapy and social work. Several methodological difficulties arise (Pauw, 2000; Smith-Osborne & Selby, 2010), and qualitative and quantitative studies reach different conclusions about the effects (Pauw, 2000). The research about therapy and social work with horses is often hypothesis-generating (Johansen, 2008; Kaiser et al., 2004; Wilson & Barker, 2003). Based on observations, client reports, and the reports from staff who practice equine assisted work, there seem to be

potential benefits for clients with mental illnesses, including eating disorders (Cumella, 2003. In a program for adolescents with emotional, behavioral, or learning problems where horses assist, Holmes et al. (2011) found a significant reduction in self-reported anxiety. The stable can be regarded as a social arena where young girls/women in particular are given the opportunity to increase their perception of self-efficacy (Koren & Træen, 2003). In a sample of Norwegian adolescents, Hauge & Kvalem (2013), no effects were found regarding self-efficacy, but a relationship between low self-efficacy and increased persistence during tasks with the horses could be observed. Other studies among risk populations of adolescents and young adults reported improved self-confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of mastery, empathy, and the opening of positive opportunities, thanks to the interaction with the horses (Bower & MacDonald, 2001; Burgon, 2012).

Clients under treatment

The clients in this study were in residential treatment for eating disorders, self-injury behavior as well as suicidal tendencies. These conditions often develop during adolescence, and known factors involve a combination of the individual's perfectionism, high standards, and low self-esteem (Abrahamsson, Torbiornsson, & Hägglöf, 2007; Hagqvist, 2010; Holmqvist, Carlberg, & Hellgren, 2007; Jablonska, Lindberg, Lindblad, & Hjern, 2009; Kåver & Nilsone, 2003; Lundh, Karim, & Quilisch, 2007; Lundh & Bjärehed, 2008, Lunner et al., 2000). Another aspect relevant to the present study is emotional regulation, which may play a significant role in the maintenance of eating problems (Gianini, White, & Masheb, 2013). Emotional regulation could be defined as an activity to regulate either the magnitude or the duration of an emotional response (Gross, 2013). Emotional regulation skills in a social context are shown to be of importance for well-being in adolescence (Silvers et al.,

2012). Those who have not learned emotional self-regulation are more likely to have difficulties in school and with friendships. Furthermore, attachment orientations, cognitive-emotional complexity and mindfulness seem to play a role in emotional regulation (Coats & Blanchard-Fields, 2008; Hill & Updegraff, 2012; Naim, Hirschberger, Ein-Dor, & Mikulincer, 2013). The potentially damaging impact of negative emotions on the processing of emotional information can be prevented by high emotional awareness or with the implementation of reappraisal as an emotional regulation strategy (Szcygie, Buczny, & Baziniska, 2012).

Residential treatment is a last resort when other methods of treatment have failed and the choice of therapy seems random (Andreassen, 2003; Frensch & Cameron, 2002; Sunseri, 2004). The client's own experiences should be regarded as important in the process of investigating residential treatment (Holleran Steiker, 2008; Nevonen & Broberg, 2000; Rutter, 2000). Clients, particularly young clients, may perceive institutional environments as stressful (Bickman et al., 2004; Zegers, Schuengel, van Ijzendoom, & Janssens, 2006). Faced with this stress, they tend to turn to the staff to manage the institutional environment (Bickman et al., 2004; Zegers et al., 2006). Young clients who have a positive relationship with staff have fewer problems in general, better school performance, and more friendships (Walter & Petr, 2008). The staff's mutual respect, genuine listening, and openness toward clients are required to achieve a trusting relationship (Hasenfeld, 2010; Manso, Rauktis, & Boyd, 2008, Richmond & Padgett, 2002), which is associated with empathy, honesty, respect, sensitivity, kindness, helpfulness, creativity, commitment, responsibility, reliability, and patience. What is perceived positively and negatively may differ between the individual client and members of staff, however (Manso et al., 2008; Richmond & Padgett, 2002).

Framing the study

An ideal of our time is for an individual to act in a way that increases the likelihood of others' perception of one as a "true" or "real" person, as opposed to a "false" or "untrue" person. We emphasise the value of acting in accordance with our inner qualities. These descriptions indicate that our self-presentation can be analysed in terms of Giddens (1991) concepts "nature," "culture," and "authenticity". Neither "nature" nor "culture" are given qualities. The concepts are given a meaning and content. A researcher may call something "natural" or "cultural" after having defined the concepts with the intent to use them for a particular purpose. However, these definitions may not overlap or correspond to those of the informant. If an informant should use the concept, the researcher must work to separate his or her analytical use from the common language of the informant. In this study, we will understand the concept of "nature" as something "raw," not socialized or cultivated. "Nature" will primarily be used as the opposite of the concept "culture." There is a long tradition of analyzing human responses within these categories. "Culture" is the human, the formed, the socially accepted, and the non-random. When we talk about "culture" we talk about it as opposed to "nature," as categories we assign to something informants have expressed using other words. It is the same with "authenticity". According to Giddens (1991) understanding, the "authentic" is both "cultural" and "natural." Authenticity is not necessarily opposed to culture, but it stands in contrast to the imagined, the fake, and the insincere. To be "authentic" is to be true to yourself and show true thoughts and feelings. Non-authentic, on the other hand, refers to hiding oneself from others and from one's own self. An "authentic" individual is the one who lives out her/his inner, true self in a world where many do not reach this inner state. The most authentic individual is she/he who expresses the natural in a cultural manner.

In addition, according to Jordan (2010), people are born social and have an urge to

have social relationships. People strive for social acceptance and recognition for who they are in their relationships. People are, to varying degrees, insecure about themselves, however, and fear rejection. Those who fear this more than average, or what may be considered "normal" may tend to devalue themselves and hide the qualities of which they are ashamed. In turn, they may perceive themselves as less authentic in their social relationships, and, accordingly, the relationships they enter into may not fully fulfil their desires and needs (Jordan, 2010). The relationships are not authentic. When a person has been hurt severely and rejected in a previous relationship, he or she may have a greater need to build new relations rather than to avoid further social contact. Simultaneously, he or she may perceive that authentic relationships are not safe (Jordan, 2010). This is called the *relational paradox*.

Therefore staff cannot take a position of power, distance, and objectivity to reach an "authentic relationship" in a therapeutic setting (Jordan, 2010). Staff need to be present in the moment, take in the differences that arise, and be open to change themselves (Jordan, 2010). Present in the moment could be explained as not focusing on doing but focusing on being or a state of active, open, intentional attention on the present. To become an observer from moment to moment without judging - a form of non-judgemental awareness. To handle the behaviors and the feelings of clients, staff members need to (1) know the client's feeling by intuition and communication and at the same time adapt their feelings to the situation; (2) elicit the desired emotional response, and (3) understand that the client may not want to show the emotions necessary to create interpersonal relationships according to Guy et. al. (2010). This form of emotional labour requires the staff to manage their own emotions as well as the client's emotions, a task that active listening, responsiveness, empathy and the ability to negotiate can achieve (Guy et al., 2010). Although it is often characterised as unprofessional for staff to

show their emotions to the clients, it may be of value in some interventions (Guy et.al., 2010).

The client's thoughts and emotions and their ability to deal with them are also of importance for the treatment outcome. To clarify, according to the theory of *cognitive dissonance* the participants would try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance, or avoid situations and information, which could increase dissonance (Festinger, 1957). However, the way the dissonance is treated is affected by whether the message is perceived as moderately uncommon. If not moderately uncommon defense mechanisms could appear and make it more likely that avoidance is chosen according to Bateson (1972).

Method

The purpose of this study was to explore by means of qualitative methods the meaning of EASW for young women with self-harm problems in residential treatment. Seen from the eyes of the clients and the staff members, what role and meaning are assigned to the horse as used in EASW? How does the interaction with the horse contribute to the client's and staff's perceptions of authenticity and the possibilities for being in an authentic relation?

Participants

There were no exclusion criteria except for those under 15 years that could not attend because of difficulties in getting consent from their parents. Those who attended the first interview, nine out of eleven female clients aged 15–21 years, were those who wanted to participate in the study. Four of these were observed and interviewed since they had experience of EASW for more than one semester. Two other clients with the same experience were not observed because they dropped out of the treatment. Those were the girls with experience with horses prior to their inclusion in the EASW. The other girls had met horses in the company of friends a couple of times except for one that had no prior

experience of horses or of other animals kept as pets. EASW is an individual treatment in this setting and the clients were therefore observed individually. The clients came from different regions in Sweden, and all but one had Swedish ethnicity.

Furthermore, we interviewed eight staff members who worked with horses as a complementary treatment or activity. Only those who worked in the complementary treatment EASW were also observed and interviewed in depth, others such as the staff that only worked with horses as an activity, were excluded. All staff had previous experience with horses and all had owned one or more horses. The staff had different educational backgrounds; one was a social pedagogue, one was a social worker, two were psychotherapeutically trained, two were nurses, one was a riding instructor, and one was a treatment assistant. Even if the staff in the study came from different educational backgrounds they all have specific education and experience in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectic Behavioral Therapy (DBT), which is the theoretical base in the work with the clients. In addition all three staff, who were observed and interviewed in depth, had undergone a three year riding-therapy educational program.

Moreover, the horses observed represented different races and age, gender, experience, temperament and size varied. Everything from Shetland ponies, Icelandic horses, Lusitanos, Dutch warm-bloods and Norwegian fjord horses were represented in the study.

Setting

To reduce the risk of stigma, the clients' treatment was based on a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and personality approaches (Lunner et al., 2000; Nevonen & Broberg, 2000; Norring, Engström & Enzell, 2002). EASW was offered one hour weekly and used as a complement to the ordinary program. Client participation was voluntary. Because EASW is flexible, an individual

design was made for each client based on her treatment goals and desires. EASW was carried out individually with each client based on knowledge of this client group's needs for perfection and previous experiences that their clients were not comfortable working in a group with horses. The EASW was designed to increase the client's self-esteem, modify her behavior, reduce her fears and phobias, and give her the possibility to relax and have fun.

In addition the staff set the boundaries for what could be done in each session based on the safety of the client and the horse. The horse's temperament, behavior, and willingness to interact were assessed on a daily basis. The client's assessment included a mental status examination. If the client exhibited a negative emotional status, signs of aggression, and could not contain their anger for example, the session with the horse was cancelled for safety reasons. Other caveats were if there were indications that the clients were acting as if the horse was a potential sex-object. It was unusual that the staff needed to cancel the session. Usually the clients empathy for the horse made themselves say that they needed to wait until they were okay to be with the horse. There was no requirement for previous experience with animals or horses prior to EASW participation. The clients continuously learned about the horses so that they would be able to interact safely with the horses. Several of the clients were initially frightened, but this often changed to an appreciation of the horses.

Procedure/Design

The regional Ethical Review Board in Linköping, Sweden, approved the study for both humans and animals, and it was conducted in accordance with ethical standards both considering humans and horses (Andersson, Friend, Evans, & Bushong, 1999; McGreevy, 2004; Minero & Canali, 2008; Saslow, 2002). First in-depth interviews that lasted between 40 and 60 minutes based on six to seven themes were conducted separately with the clients and the staff members at the

treatment setting, except for one staff member who was interviewed at a hotel. The goal of the first interview was a freedom for the informants to decide for themselves what they wanted to say as the study is exploratory. Conducting interviews in the same way with both staff and clients was based on the wish to obtain the perspectives of both groups and make comparisons. Next observations were video taped and conducted three times with each pair of staff and client who worked together in EASW. Conducting video taped observations was based on the hypothesis that there could be aspects in the interaction with the horse that clients and staff were not aware of. In addition the study is exploratory, not all questions were ready in advance. From an ethical standpoint the participants were spared from numerous observations if additional issues would be raised along the way. The videotape also provided opportunities for other scientists to see the observations and review analysis and participants had the opportunity to comment on their experience.

After the observations, the clients and the staff members were interviewed separately, with open questions based on an initial analysis from the first interviews and observations. These in-depth interviews were conducted in direct conjunction with one of the observations made with clients and staff members, thus giving the informants a greater ability to provide rich descriptions of their experiences. All the interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed word for word (Hallberg, 2002; Kvale, 1997).

Analysis

The material from the interviews was grouped by clusters of meaning with the data program MACQDA. The data was analyzed through an empirical phenomenological analysis, which focused on the clients' and staff members' experiences of their personal and social worlds, and in accordance with Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2012), moving from the particular to the shared and from the descriptive to the interpretative. The first in-

depth interviews and observations were analyzed before the second in-depth interviews were carried out. This analysis resulted in new questions, almost the same for the staff and the clients, which were raised in the second in-depth interview. The videos were studied in the light of the answers from the interviews, theoretical framework, and earlier research. The empirical data was compared between clients and between staff and finally even between client and staff to look for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2012). This resulted in the re-labelling of themes and when combining interviews with observations the figure developed which illustrates the relationships between themes (Smith et al., 2012). Field notes written by the researcher accompanied with constant dialogue with reference persons; students, practitioners and researchers in the field of human–horses in interaction for health both national and internationally were made to consider validity and reliability in the study.

Results

Based on a method of constant comparison between clients and clients, staff and staff as well as clients and staff, three clusters emerged from the empirical data analysis. The clusters which emerged from this analysis were: (1) the horse mirroring emotions - an opportunity for emotional communication, (2) emotional awareness and regulation through presens in the moment, and (3) authentic relationships despite relational paradox.

The horse mirroring emotions - an opportunity for emotional communication

The horse reflected the emotions, intentions, attitudes, and mental status of both the client and staff. According to both staff members and clients you could lie to each other about how you felt but it was impossible to lie to the horse.

We have had girls who did not want to open up and said that this is easy. I have no anxiety. I have no problem. I have nothing I want to talk about and then they may not even come close to the horse. I use the horse as the mirror and it gets pretty un-dramatic. You cannot lie to the horse and the horse gives me the answer. You can lie to me but you cannot lie to the horse. (Staff L)

The clients and the staff members agreed that the horse gave an immediate response to emotions and intentions and did not care how they appeared otherwise. The clients perceived the horse as mirroring their inner state.

If I'm worried and have anxiety in my body the horse gets worried and does not know where to go. The horse mirrors my emotions. (Client G)

In addition several clients stated that the relationship with the horse was the most important. Some clients considered quitting the program if they could not continue working with a particular horse. They all agreed that horses communicated with greater clarity and were more honest than people were. An important aspect in this context, which contributed to their perception that the relationship with the horse was authentic, was the horse's ability to sense the client's feelings.

It feels like the animals can feel how you are and that is something humans do not always do. So if you feel bad and then the human may not perceive it, then you can feel even worse when you know that the person does not even notice it. The animals do not lie, deceive, or betray—not as long as you do not betray them, or actually not even then. (Client I)

Consequently the staff stated that it was easier to talk about the clients' feelings as the behavior of the horse reflected them. The clients were calmer and did not find it so threatening to talk about their feelings.

It is, true that you cannot disguise yourself, a horse knows all about you, if you are afraid, angry, stressed, or so on. We can read the horse and give that information back to the client. (Staff L)

According to both clients and staff members, the treatment with the horses was about the client getting to know herself and about improving her ability to empathize, improving her self-esteem and self-confidence, and overcoming her fears and phobias.

It's not just about a horse. You learn to know yourself. The course is not all about the horses. It's about working with yourself. (Client G)

Furthermore the clients looked upon the horse as a close and trustworthy friend. This perception of the horse's trustworthiness derived from clients' feelings that the horse read their emotions and intentions and from their opportunity to cuddle them.

Emotional awareness and regulation through presence in the moment

Because the interaction with the horse could be dangerous, the humans had to develop awareness. Both the clients and the staff were aware that a horse could be dangerous if the human was not calm and did not behave properly. For this reason, a person must always be present at the moment when working with horses.

There must be a calm environment. You cannot run around in the barn or in the pasture because the horse gets stressed. You must feel calm when you go to the horse, otherwise it will not end up well. (Client G)

Therefore it was important to avoid frightening the horse. A scared horse will show avoidance behavior, will not cooperate, or may even show aggression. The horse could

turn its head high toward the client and tilt its ears backwards showing that it did not appreciate what was happening. To prevent this, the staff members as well as clients had to monitor their feelings and intentions at all times. The horse responded to their emotions, intentions, and energy. A positive response could be turning its head toward the client, tilting its ears forward. Neutral response could be ears relaxed to the side, head lowered and the eyes soft and relaxed. Both staff and clients had to reflect upon themselves and, as seen in the observations, be mindful about what they brought into the situation with the horse. The clients took more account of the horses than they did of the staff. The clients sometimes acted aggressively inside the treatment centre but never when they were among the horses. Nothing was thrown or broken in the stable. They seemed to become more self-regulating in terms of feeling less aggression, fear, or stress.

You learn to regulate your emotions. It was great that I could stay focused and calm with a horse like that, because I have difficulties with being calm. You have to be calmer when you are having riding therapy than you have to be when you are in the house. (Client D)

In addition the staff members talked about the horse possibility to create unpredictable situations that could occur when the clients worked with the horses. These situations could not be re-created in a normal situation in the treatment facilities. The horse gave the clients opportunities to develop their abilities for empathy, stress management, mental training, and relaxation; they found it was easier to get close to a horse than to a person. Being present in the moment made the clients more open to learn new experiences. Because the horse did not accuse them of anything, wrongdoing could be forgiven, which lowered the clients' urge to take a defensive stand. It seemed from the observations the clients did not perceive a

message from the horse—in contrast to a message from the staff—as threatening. The work with the horses seemed to provide a calm bodily sensation in the clients and an opportunity to learn and practice—for example, putting up limits and saying no, which they otherwise found difficult to do. To be present in the moment also made the clients more relaxed. Feeling relaxed was partly associated with the physical contact with the horse. The clients also expressed that their anxiety levels decreased in the company of horses. They thought this made it possible to act more independently outside the stables as well, in school, for example, where they dared to say no to peers.

I've learned to say no with the help of the horse. I have learned to say no to other people. (Client I)

As a result the opportunity for self-development was a common motive underlying work with the horses. The horse gave the clients opportunities to develop their abilities for empathy, stress management, mental training, and relaxation; they found it easier to get close to a horse than to a person.

Moreover all staff members emphasized the importance of knowing the horse you work with in therapy. It was important to rely on the horse. At the same time, staff believed that there might be problems working with the staff's own horse because this tended to be more personal, and their own horses did not always offer the calmness and size that the clients needed (the clients preferred small and quiet horses). All staff members also agreed that their view of the horses had changed over time. The horse had gone from being a competitive sports tool or a hobby to being a friend and a partner. They learned that the horse gave them an opportunity to develop such personal qualities as approach, reaction patterns, attitudes, values and ways of thinking and acting. The staff members more often reflected upon how they themselves affected the horse depending on their emotional status,

such as being stressed or in a bad mood. The staff also explained that the situation with the horse and the client was for real; neither the client nor the staff could put on an act. Staff shared their own experiences with the clients, and staff and clients talked more about what happens here and now than about possible future events and happenings.

Authentic relation despite the relational paradox

The informants were asked about their views on what a good relationship should be like, about their own inter-personal relationships, and about their relationship with the horse. Both the staff and the clients said that you could not lie to the horse. This meant that the relationship with the horse was built on trust and respect. As a consequence, they tended to perceive the relationship with the horse as more authentic than relationships with humans.

> *When you work with the girls out here, we meet on a more equal level and you can give each other more respect in some ways. Many have real difficulties in trusting others. When we talk about trust, they say, Yes, you may be able to trust me, but I will never trust anyone. I never trust anyone, I rely only on myself. But when we are doing this kind of job together, the relations are different. (Staff M)*

Furthermore all staff members and most of the clients agreed that the relationship between the staff and the clients in the presence of the horse was less strict and based more on mutual respect. The observations supported this notion and showed a shift in power balance between the staff and the clients, which made them act on more equal terms. One factor that contributed to this was that the staff members did not always have the correct answer. This provided the clients with a possibility to show their competence and to succeed where the staff had shortcomings.

> *We might succeed and we may not succeed. Then we can have a discussion about it; was it me or the patient who had the stress? Just a thing that it is not even certain that I succeed. Sometimes it is me, sometimes it is the opposite. (Staff B)*

The clients often mentioned that they had bad previous experiences from close relationships. They wished for relationships where the other would stay close to them no matter what. Not all of the clients had a close relationship with the staff. One client, who initially was very interested in horses, stopped the treatment with horses because she claimed she had bad chemistry with the staff and that the staff expected too much of her. Another client said that she did not like the staff person prior to meeting her with the horse, but this changed after seeing how the staff member interacted with the horses. After this observation, the client perceived the staff member to be a more multidimensional individual.

> *The staff told me about her emotions and then she became a person for me not only the boss. (Client A)*

Similarly the staff believed that working with the horses gave the staff and the clients a more authentic picture of one another. They had observed that it was consistently easier to communicate with the clients in the presence of the horses.

> *They see another side of us who engage in equine-assisted social work. To raise difficult topics, which are unpleasant to talk about. It does not hurt so much when you have mutual experiences with the clients from being with the horse. I feel it might also be me that feels it is safer to talk about difficult things or conflicts, because I have experienced things with the client and the horse, and then you establish a relationship faster. (Staff H)*

Furthermore, the staff and the clients were not directly facing each other, and this seemed to make the conversation more casual. They did not have the direct eye contact of regular verbal therapy, where staff member and client sit opposite each other, which may prevent the client from talking.

Discussion

We have seen that the horse's ability to read human emotions made the staff and clients aware of their own emotions. The horse has the capacity to be an "emotional mirror" for the participants according to the concept of "causal capacity" (Brante, 2001). In order not to alienate the horse or make the situation dangerous, the clients and staff said that they had to detect and recognize their own emotions and subsequently regulate them, which intensified their sense of being in the present. It has been claimed that the horse's distinctive combination of fearfulness and power, allied with its natural ability to read and mirror human emotions, intentions, non-verbal communication and behavior, seems to be important in explaining why EASW can be effective (Cody, Holleran Steiker, & Szymandera, 2011, Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, Rothe, 2005; Rothe et al., 2005, Vidrine et al., 2002; Wipper, 2000). Although the effect of EASW was not the topic of this study, our findings lead in the same direction. Because the horse can be dangerous, our participants said they needed a high degree of awareness of their own emotions, intentions, and attitudes in the present moment when interacting with the horse. Klontz et al. (2007) report similar findings. Consequently, as observed in the video and confirmed by the staff and the clients themselves, the clients felt calmer, had less anxiety, and were less unfriendly or aggressive toward others when they were dealing with the horse on the stable premises. They thus experienced a higher degree of emotional self-regulation, which had been found in other studies (Holmes et al., 2011;
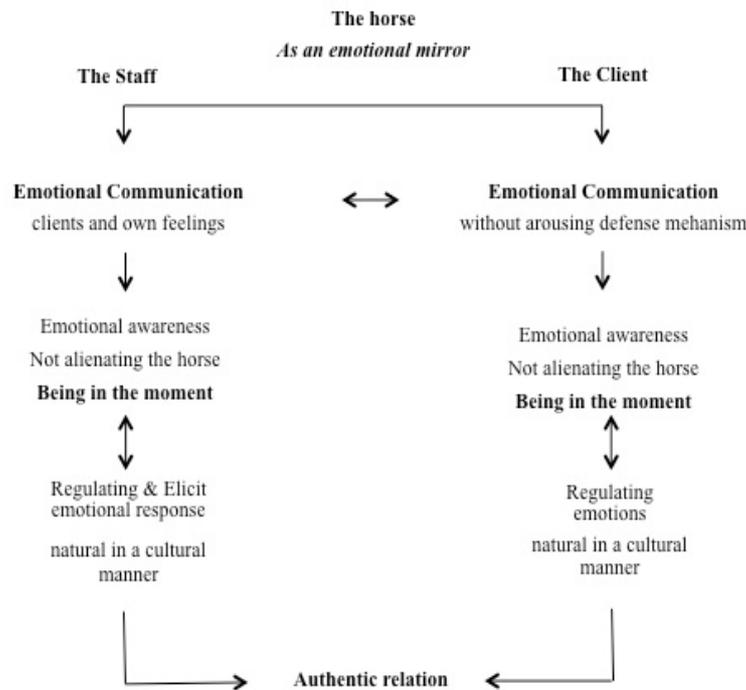
Kaiser et al., 2004; Klontz et al., 2007; Vidrine et al., 2002). The clients were not the only ones influenced by the horse's presence. Similarly the staff members had to focus on the self-regulation of their own emotions, however, in addition to considering the emotional needs of the client, who may not want to share thoughts and feelings with them.

In light of the clients' experiences of being hurt and rejected in earlier relationships, they highlighted the horse as more honest and trustworthy than humans are. The horse's role in reflecting emotions seemed to open up topics the clients were reluctant to talk about because they feared rejection. The clients did not always want to show their emotions to the staff. However, the interaction with the horse did not seem to raise defence mechanisms or resistance for change in the clients because the horse was seen as non-judgmental. Rather the opposite, the interaction with the horse produced feelings of trust and respect, which in turn made it possible for the client to show her "true emotions" and "authentic self." She could escape her "false self" and "take off the mask," which otherwise protected her from her environment. This scenario has also been described in earlier research (Buswell & Leriou, 2007; Christian, 2005; Cody et al., 2011; Træen et al., 2012). Hence, the relationship with the horse may be seen as an "authentic relationship."

In addition the staff did not always have the right solution, it could be the client instead, and therefore the client could move from a self-perception of "being nothing" to one of "being someone", which made them feel like a real, true, or "authentic" person. Also the staff felt more authentic in the stable as they stepped out of traditional frameworks for how to be a professional. In a western society the professional social worker is supposed to have a certain distance to their client according to Brydon (2012). In contrast to this culture the staff members observed that they were more direct in their feedback to the clients in the company of horses. Not only did the usual verbal communication change; the horse

seemed to allow staff and clients to make physical contact, both with the horse and themselves, for example in the form of adjustments to the client's body movements. For staff members to use physical contact,

possibility of getting close to the horse seemed to set the framework for the staff and the clients meeting in the stable arena. Stable-based relationships experienced as based on trust, respect, and negotiation can be

The horse
As an emotional mirror

The Staff   **The Client**

Emotional Communication   ⟷   **Emotional Communication**
clients and own feelings   without arousing defense mehanism

Emotional awareness   Emotional awareness
Not alienating the horse   Not alienating the horse
Being in the moment   **Being in the moment**

Regulating & Elicit   Regulating
emotional response   emotions

natural in a cultural   natural in a cultural
manner   manner

Authentic relation

Figure 1: The horse as an emotional mirror in Equine-Assisted Social Work (EASW) providing opportunities for an authentic relationship between staff and clients.

show emotions, give direct feedback, and share private matters could be seen as unprofessional in a clinical context. In the stable arena, however, other rules seemed to apply. Emotional expressions by both the staff and clients are likely to produce a sense of being real and true, and the interaction is likely to be perceived accordingly as a more "authentic relationship." Because of the negotiation necessary to handle the horse and make the situation predictable, the staff-client relationship seemed to be informal, dynamic, equal and power balanced in the stable arena. The risk of alienating the horse and the

Implications for clinical work and research

According to the informants, empathy, honesty, respect, sensitivity, responsibility, patience, active listening, ability to negotiate,

interpreted accordingly as representing more authentic relationships compared to relationships outside of the stable.

As a result the horse altered the perception of what is considered socially acceptable and appropriate behavior by the staff. Furthermore the staff explained that the interaction with the horse was perceived as "real" because neither the client nor the staff could interact according to the prescribed roles in a traditional treatment setting. This facilitated the possibility of achieving the authentic relationship.

and responsiveness are the main ingredients in the work with the horse. These aspects are connected with a good therapeutic alliance and may contribute to a successful treatment outcome (Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000;

Wampold, 2000b). The human-horse interaction seems to create feelings of trust. The clients find it easier to bond with the horse because it has no expectations of the clients, unlike the staff who are perceived to have expectations. The clients perceive the horse as non-judgmental, honest, reliable, and without prejudices; it offer physical contact and give direct feedback. In relation to the relational paradox it seems as if the horse has something to teach the staff in terms of attitude to clients. Consequently the staff should consider working with non-judgemental awareness, active listening and constant negotiation.

Nevertheless the horse provides an opportunity for both clients and staff to mirror their emotions. The interaction with the horse gives options other than in traditional social work, where it is easier for both staff and clients to hide their emotions (Karol, 2007). The emotional awareness in the moment change the framework for the meeting between staff members and clients, making it more natural in a cultural manner and therefore more authentic according to Giddens (1991). Including emotions in social work research is more than adding emotions to the inventory of social research topics according to Wetherell (2012), Gausel (2011) and Morrison (2007). There is a need for a change in ontological and epistemological views, a paradigm change. Social constructionism has treated feelings as rules and discourses but perhaps that is over-simplifying in a complex world? Affective practice is about the emotional as it appears in social life and to follow what participants do. There are no simple lines or causations or emotion categories according to Wetherell (2012). The stable provides opportunities for interaction other than the therapy room because other rules apply and staff and clients becomes more equal and perceive their relations as more "authentic". Furthermore altered frames of the conversation, the absence of direct eye contact, might look similar in horticultural therapy and green care which is why comparisons with research in those fields should be done.

In addition the horse opened the door for clients to get rid of anxiety and aggression, which resulted in calm and relaxation. This opened up communication between staff and client about emotions, which in turn could increase insights. Not only client's resistance but also professionals' resistance is highlighted and focus should be directed on relationships that produce mutually beneficial identities according to Juhila and Abrams (2011). Other implications regarding emotional awareness and emotional regulation are that the work together with the horse, containing the opportunity to be in the present, could be a social context required for providing learning and well being for this particular client group (Gianini et al., 2013, Hill & Updegraff, 2012, Lundh & Bjärhed, 2008; Naim et al., 2013, Silvers et al., 2012 Szcygie et al., 2012). Considering the definition of EASW as a method or a tool, the staff and the clients agree to define the horse as a friend or a partner. The observations indicating a strong link with CBT and DBT combined with defining the horse as a friend or a partner leads to the conclusion that EASW becomes more of a supplement to existing practices and methods.

Finally considerations are needed about the small sample, but the results correspond with previous research, reference persons and staffmembers and clients agree with each other indicating transferability. The staff seems to influence whether the mirroring of emotions, emotional awareness and regulation reproduced here go ahead or not, which in turn affects the event of an authentic relationship. This could for example explain the inconsistency about increasing perception or no effects regarding self-efficacy (Bower & MacDonald, 2001; Burgon, 2012; Hauge & Kvalem, 2013; Koren & Træen, 2003). Therefore further research is needed to see which conditions are favourable for achieving an authentic relationship and which conditions possibly fail.

References

Abrahamsson, E., Torbiornsson, A., & Hägglöf, B. (2007). Causes of Adolescent Onset Anorexia Nervosa: Patient Perspectives. *Journal of Eating Disorders, 15*(2),125-133.

Adams, K., LeCroy, C., & Matto, H. C. (2009). Limitations of Evidence-based practice for social work education: unpacking the complexity. *Journal of Social Work Education, 45*(2), 165-186.

Andreassen, T. (2003). *Institutionsbehandling av ungdomar Vad säger forskningen?* Stockholm, Centrum för utvärdering av socialt arbete, Statens institutionsstyrelse och Förlagshuset Gothia AB.

Andersson, M.K., Friend, H.T, Evans, W- J., & Bushong, D. M. (1999). Behavioral assessment of horses in therapeutic riding programs. *Applied Animal Behavior Science, 63*, 11-24.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology.* Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

Beck, A.M. & Katcher, A.H. (2003). Future directions in Human-Animal Bond Research, *American Behavioral Scientist,47*, 79-93.

Bickman, L., Vides de Andrade, A.R, Lambert,E.W., Doucette,A., Sapyta, J., & Boyd, A.S. (2004). Youth therapeutic alliance in intensive treatment settings. *Journal of Behavioral Health Service and Research, 31*(29), 124-148.

Bizub, A.L., Joy, A., & Davidson, L (2003). "It's like being in another world": Demonstrating the benefits of therapeutic horseback riding for individuals with psychiatric disability. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 26*, 377-384.

Bower, M., & MacDonald, P. (2001). The effectiveness of equine-facilitated psychotherapy with at-risk adolescents. *Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, 15*, 62-76.

Brante, T. (2001). Consequences of Realism for Sociological Theory-Building. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 31*(2),167-195.

Brydon, K. (2012). Promoting diversity or confirming hegemony? In search of new insights for social work. *International Social Work,55*(2), 155-167.

Buswell, D., & Leriou, F. (2007). Perceived Benefits of Students Service-Learning Experiences with Hippo therapy. *Palaestra,23*(1), 20-26.

Burgon, H.L., (2012). "Queen of the world": experiences of "at-risk" young people participating in equine-assisted learning/therapy. *Journal of Social Work Practice: Psychotherapeutic Approaches in Health, Welfare and the Community, 25* (02), 165-183.

Chamove, A.S., Crawley-Hatrick, O.J.E., Stafford, K.J. (2002). Horse reactions to human attitudes and behavior. *Anthrozoös 15*, 323-331.

Christian, J.E (2005). All creatures great and small: Utilizing equine-assisted therapy to treat eating disorders. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 24*, 65-67.

Coats A.H., & Blanchard-Fields, F. (2008). Emotional Regulation in Interpersonal Problems; The Role of Cognitive-Emotional Complexity, Emotion Regulation Goals and Expressivity. *Psychology and Aging,23*(1), 39-51.

Cody, P., Holleran Steiker, L., & Szymandera, M.L. (2011). Equine Therapy: Substance Abusers Healing Through Horses. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions, 11*(2), 198-204.

Cumella, E. J. & Marx, R., D. (2003). "Questions & answers", *Eating disorders: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention,11*(2), 143-147.

Dell, C. A., Chalmers, D., Dell, D., Sauve, E., & MacKinnon, T. (2008). Horse as Healer: An examination of equine assisted learning in the healing of first nations youth from solvent abuse. *A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 6*(1), 81-106.

Dell, C. A., Chalmers, D., Bresette, N., Swain, S., Rankin, D., & Hopkins, C. (2011). A Healing Space: The experiences of First Nations and Inuit Youth with Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL). *Child Youth Care Forum 40*, 319-336.

Ekesbo, I. (2011). *Farm animal behavior characteristics for assessment of health and welfare.* UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ewing, C.A., MacDonald, P.M., Taylor, M., & Bowers, M.J., (2007). Equine-facilitated Learning for Youths with Severe Emotional Disorders: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study *Child Youth Care Forum 36*, 59-72

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Foley, A.J (2008). *Conflict and Connection: A Theoretical and evaluative study of an Equine-Assisted psychotherapy program for at risk and delinquent girls.* (Thesis).Oklahoma State University,Whitehurst USA.

Frensch, K. M., & Cameron, G. (2002). Treatment of Choice or a Last Resort? A Review of Residential Mental Health Placements for Children and Youth. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 31*(5), 307-339.

Frewin, K., & Gardiner, B. (2005). New age or old sage? A review of equine assisted psychotherapy. *Journal of Counselling Psychology,6*, 13-17.

Gausel, N. (2011). The importance of emotions in social work: thematic directions from a national conference. *European Journal of Social Work,14*(2), 287-291.

Gianini, L.M., White, M.A. ,& Masheb, R.M. (2013). Eating pathology, emotion regulation and emotional overeating in obese adults with binge eating disorders. *Eating behaviors, 14*, 309-313.

Giddens, A.(1991). *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gress, K. (2003). Animals helping people. People helping animals. Interview by Shirley A Smoyak. *Journal Psychosocial Nursing Mental Health Services. 41*(8), 18-25.

Gross, J.J. (2013). Emotional Regulation: Taking Stock and Moving Forward. *Emotion 13*(3), 359-365.

Guy, M., Newman, M.A., Mastracci, S.H., & Maynard-Moody, S. (2010). Emotional Labor in the Human Service Organization. In Y. Hasenfeld(Ed.) *Human Services as Complex Organizations(291-310).* London: Sage.

Hagqvist, C. (2010). Discrepant Trends in Mental Health Complaints among Younger and Older Adolescents in Sweden: An Analysis of WHO Data 1985-2005. *Journal of Adolescent Health,46*, 258-264.

Hallberg, L. R-M (Ed.). (2002). *Qualitative Methods in Public Health Research – theoretical Foundations and Practical Example.s* Studentlitteratur. Lund

Hama, H., Yogo, M., & Matsuyama, Y.(1996). Effects of stroking horses on both humans and horses heart rate responses. *Japanese Psychological. Research 38*(2), 66-73.

Hasenfeld, Y. (2010). *Worker-Client Relations: Social Policy in Practice* in Y. Hasenfeld (Ed) *Human Services as Complex Organizations (405-427)* London: Sage.

Hauge, H., Kvalem, I. L., Pedersen, I., & Braastad, B. O. (2013). Equine-Assisted Activities for Adolescents: Ethogram-based behavioral analysis of persistence during horse-related tasks and communication patterns with the horse *Human-Animal Interaction Buletin 1*(2), 57-81

Henry, S., Hemery, D., Richard. M.A., Hausberger, M. (2005). Human-mare relationships and behavior of foals toward humans. *Applied Animal Behavior Science, 50*, 341-362.

Hill, C. L.M., & Updegraff , J. A. (2012). Mindfulness and its relationship to emotional regulation . *Emotion,12*(1), 81-90.

Holleran Steiker. L .K. (2008). Cultural Considerations for Residential Treatment of Children and/or Adolescents. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth, 23*(1), 61-74.

Holmes, C.M.P., Goodwin, D., Redhead, E.S., & Goymour, K.L. (2011). The Benefits of Equine Assisted Activities: An Exploratory Study. *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal, 29*, 111-122.

Holmqvist, R., Carlberg, M., & Hellgren, L. (2007). Deliberate Self-harm Behavior in Swedish Adolescent Girls Reports from Public Assessment and Treatment Agencies. *Child Youth Care Forum, 37*, 1-13.

Håkansson, M., Karlsson Palmgren, C., & Sandgren, V. (2008). *Kartläggning av verksamheter som använder hästar i vård och behandling i Sverige 2008.* Stiftelsen Svensk Hästforskning.

Jablonska, B., Lindberg, L. Lindblad, F., & Hjern, A. (2009). Ethnicity, socio-economic status and self-harm in Swedish youth: a national cohort study. *Psychological Medicine, 38*, 87-94.

Johansen, S.G. (2008). Equine facilitated psychotherapy in mood disorders. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 107,* 53-12.

Jordan, J. V. (2010). *Relational-Cultural Therapy.* Baltimore, MD: United Book Press, Inc.

Juhila, K & Abrams, L. S. (2011). Special Issue Editorial: Constructing Identities in Social Work Settings. *Qualitative Social Work, 10*(3). 277-292.

Kaiser, L., Spence, L. J., Lavergne, A.G., & Vanden Bosch, K.L (2004). Can a week of therapeutic riding make a difference? – A pilot study. *Anthrozoös, 17*(1), 63-72.

Karol, J. (2007). Applying a Traditional Individual Psychotherapy Model to Equine-facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP):

Theory and Method. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12*(1), 77-90.

Klontz, B. T., Bivens, A., Leinart, D., & Klontz, T. (2007). The effectiveness of Equine-Assisted Experiential Therapy: results of an Open Clinical Trial. *Society and Animals,15*, 257-267.

Kvale, S. (1997). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Koren, E., & Træen, B.(2003). Jenter og hest. Stallen som arena for sosialisering og mestring. *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning, 3*(2).

Kåver, A., & Nilsone, Å. (2003). *Dialektisk beteendeterapi vid emotionellt instabil personlighetsstörning-Teori, strategi och teknik* Stockholm Natur och Kultur.

Lundh, L-G., & Bjärhed, J. (2008). Deliberate Self-Harm in 14- year-Old Adolescent: How Frequent Is It, and How Is It Associated with Psychopathology, Relationship Variables, and Styles of Emotional Regulation? *Cognitive Behavior Therapy, 37*(1), 26-37.

Lundh, L-G., Karim, J., & Quilisch, E. (2007). Deliberate self-harm in 15-year-old adolescent: A pilot study with a modified version of the Deliberate Self-Harm Inventory Scandinavian. *Journal of Psychology*,48, 33-41.

Lunner, K., Werthem, E.H., Thompson, J.K., Paxton, S.J., McDonald, F., & Halvaarson, K.S. (2000). A Cross-Cultural Examination of Weight-Related Teasing, Body Image, and Eating Disturbance in Swedish and Australian Samples. *The International Journal of Eating Disorders, 28*, 430-435.

Macauley, B. L., & Gutierrez, K. M. (2004). The Effectiveness of Hippo therapy for Children with Language – Learning Disabilities. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 25*(4), 205-217.

Manso, A. Rauktis, M.E., & Boyd, A. S (2008). Youth Expectations about Therapeutic Alliance in Residential

Setting. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth, 25*(1), 55-72.

Martin, D. J., Garske, J. P., & Davis, M. K (2000). Relation of the therapeutic alliance with outcome and other variables: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 68*(3), 438-450

McGreevy, P. (2004). *Equine Behavior: A Guide for Veterinarians and Equine Scientists.* UK Elsevier Limited.

Minero, M., & Canali, E. (2008). Welfare issues of horses an overview and practical recommendations. *Italian Journal Animal Science, 8*(suppl.1), 219-230.

Morrison, T. (2007). Emotional Intelligence, Emotion and Social Work: Context, Characteristics, Complications and Contribution. *British Journal of Social Work,37*, 245-263.

Naim B., Hirschberger, S., Ein-Dor, G., & Mikulincer, M. (2013). An experimental study of emotion regulation during relationship conflict interactions: The moderating role of attachment orientations. *Emotion, 13*(3), 506-519.

Nevonen, L., & Broberg, A. G. (2000). The Emergence of Eating Disorders: An Exploratory Study. *European Eating Disorders Review ,8*, 279-292.

Norring, C., Engström, I., & Enzell, K. (2002). Eating Disorders across Europe Swedish Eating Disorders Services- A Brief Modern History. *European Eating Disorders Review, 10*, 161-167.

Pauw, J. (2000). Therapeutic horseback riding studies: problems experienced by researches. *Physiotherapy 86*(10), 523-527.

Richmond, P.A., & Padgett, D. L. (2002). Finding the Line: Boundary Decisions in Residential Treatment. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth,20*(1), 53-66.

Rothe, E.Q., Vega, B.J, Torres, R.M., Campos Soler, S.M., & Molina Pazos, R.M. (2005). From kids and horses: equine facilitated psychotherapy for children. *International Journal of Clinical Health Psychology, 5*(2) 373-383.

Rutter, M. (2000). Children in Substitute Care: Some Conceptual Considerations and Research Implications. *Children and Youth Services Review, 22*, 685-703.

Sallnäs, M. (2000). *Barnavårdens institutioner – framväxt, ideologi och struktur* Stockholms Universitet, Rapport i socialt arbete, nr 96

Saslow C. A. (2002). Understanding the perceptual world of horses. *Applied Animal Behavior Science,78*, 209-224.

Silvers, J.A., Mc Rae, K., Gabrieli, J.D.E., Gross, J.J., Remy,K.A., & Ochsner, K.N. (2012) .Age-Related Differences in Emotional Reactivity, Regulation and Rejection Sensitivity in Adolescence. *Emotion 12*(6), 1235-1247.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2012), *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Theory, Method and Research.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Smith-Osborne, A., & Selby, A. (2010). Implications of the Literature in Equine-Assisted Activities for Use as a Complementary Intervention in Social Work Practice with children and Adolescents. *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal, 27*, 291-307.

Statens Offentliga Utredningar SOU 2000:109 *En svensk hästpolitik Betänkande från Hästpolitiska utredningen* Stockholm; Nordstedts tryckeri.

Sunseri, P. A. (2004). Family Functioning and Residential Treatment Outcomes. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth,22*(1), 33-53.

Szcygiel, D., Buczny, J., & Bazinska, R (2012). Emotional regulation and emotional information processing: The moderating effect of emotional awareness *Personality and Individual differences 52*(3), 433-437

Traeen, B., Moan, K-A., & Rosenvinge, J.H. (2012). Terapeuters opplevelser av hestebasert behandling for pasienter med spiseforstyrrelser. *Tidskrift for Norsk psykologforening, 49*, 348-355.

Vidrin, M., Owen-Smith, P., & Faulkner, P. (2002). Equine facilitated group psychotherapy Applications for therapeutic vaulting. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 23*, 587-603.

Walsh, F. (2009). Human-Animal Bonds: The Relational Significance of Companion Animals. *Family Process, 48*(4), 462-480.

Walter, U.M., & Petr, C.G. (2008). Family-Centered Residential Treatment: Knowledge, Research, and Values Converge. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth, 25*(1), 1-16

Wampold, B. E. (2001b). *The great psychotherapy debate: Model, methods, and findings.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and Emotion – A new social science understanding.* London: SAGE

William, B. (2005). Horsemastership part 1: Therapeutic components and link to occupational therapy. *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation, 12*(2),83-83.

Wilson, C.C., & Barker, S.B. (2003), Challenges in Designing Human-Animal Interaction Research. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47*(16), 16-28.

Wipper, A. (2000). The Partnership: The Horse-Rider Relationship in Eventing. *Symbolic Interaction, 23*(1), 47-70.

Yorke, J., Adams, C., & Coady, N., (2008). Therapeutic Value of Equine-Human Bonding in Recovering from Trauma. *Anthrozoös, 21*(1), 17-30.

Zegers, M., Schuengel, C., van Ijzendoom, M., & Janssens, J. (2006). Attachment representations of institutionalized adolescents and their professional caregivers: Predicting the development of therapeutic relationships. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,76*(3), 325-33

Appendix

The questions in the first interview focused more specifically on themes and were the same for clients and staff (except for one question to the staff about theoretical foundation) and were as follow:

1. Earlier experience with animals/horses, attitude to animals/horses today
2. Reasons for participating in Equine Assisted Social Work (EASW)
3. Description of experiences EASW similarities differences other experiences of treatment
4. Requirements for participation
5. Experienced relationship client staff/role models relationship/similarities differences relationship staff, horses
6. Pictures about future/goals

Questions for the in-depth interview with clients after and in direct conjunction with the observations.

a) Can you describe EASW for me in your own words?
b) How did you experience the horse in EASW? How would you define the horse?
c) Does EASW influence your view of the horse/horses?
d) Could you focus on the present or were your thoughts elsewhere?
e) How did you experience the staff in EASW?
f) How would you describe the relationship with the horse? Similarities, differences other relationships?
g) How would you describe the relationship with the staff? Similarities, differences other relationships?
h) Do you think/feel that you have learned anything from today's practice?
i) Were there any thoughts or feelings awakened during EASW?
j) What are your thoughts on performance in relation to EASW and the staff you work with?
k) Do you feel more or less motivated to participate in EASW after today's practice? Motivate?
l) Are there any differences or similarities between EASW and traditional treatment work?

Questions for the in-depth interview with staff members after and in direct conjunction with the observations.

a) Can you describe EASW for me in your own words?
b) How did you experience the horse in EASW? How would you define the horse?
c) Does EASW influence your view of the horse/horses?
d) How would you describe the goal of EASW?
e) How did you experience the client in EASW? How do you think she experienced the EASW?
f) How would you describe the relationship with the horse? Similarities, differences other relationships?
g) How would you describe the relationship with the client? Similarities differences other relationships?
h) Do you think that the client has learned something today from EASW?
i) Were there any thoughts or feelings awakened during EASW?
j) What are your thoughts on performance in relation to EASW and the clients you work with?
k) Do you feel that EASW affects you as a professional in the meetings with the client?
l) Are there any differences or similarities between EASW and traditional treatment work?