What is the client experience of online video-calling equine-facilitated therapy? A heuristic study

Chloe Osborne

A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Psychotherapy (MPsychotherapy)

2023

School of Clinical Sciences

Abstract

The focus of this research is to explore the client experience of online video-calling Equine-Assisted Therapy (EFT) through heuristic self-inquiry. As technology continues to reshape the landscape of mental health services, and in the wake of COVID-19 where telehealth became commonplace, online video-calling EFT could be an innovative and accessible therapy. This heuristic self-search study aimed to explore and capture the rich and subjective client experience in the context of online video-calling EFT. It is my hope that this research can add to the existing literature on this modality from the client perspective.

Data collection came in the form of reflective journaling and electronic voice notes which were transcribed. Through the client expression of thoughts, feelings, and reflections, this study aimed to explore one experience of the dynamic nature of the therapeutic alliance formed between humans and horses in a therapeutic setting.

Through the experience of EFT, I uncovered three themes: 1) embodiment, 2) attachment, and 3) grief and letting go in my personal intrapsychic landscape. I was able to grow and learn about myself, experiencing a personal transformation through the unique relational experience with horses that prioritises pre-verbal communication. Much of what I discovered was somewhat known to me in a tacit, raw, unformed, pre-conscious level. However, the experience of EFT and the heuristic process, birthing from pre-conscious to conscious explication, allowed the raw material of experience and tacit knowing to transform into something processable, and I could apprehend these dynamics with increased wholeness and clarity. I also explored the theoretical neurobiological and psychodynamic mechanics and processes that contributed to my experiences.

The findings of this heuristic self-search study have implications for the continuing development of knowledge about online video-calling EFT, and potential further integration into mental health practice. The research informs the therapeutic community and expands the evidence base surrounding online video-calling EFT, increasing mental health support, and accessibility for a diverse range of clients seeking healing and growth through equine-assisted therapy in the digital age.

Contents

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or another institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____ Date: 01/09/2023

Chloe Osborne

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisor Keith Tudor for your thoughtful feedback, support, and patience; as well as the support from my family and friends throughout this dissertation and the master's degree.

Introduction

This dissertation is a heuristic enquiry of the question: "what is the client experience of online video-calling equine-facilitated therapy?" The methodology used is interpretivist and humanistic, while the method is heuristic enquiry. I bring my subjective self to this inquiry; and to align with my methodology, in this dissertation I write in the first person. In the first chapter, I explore the existing literature and background of equine-facilitated therapy (EFT), including issues around terminology and alteration to the frame. In the second chapter, I discuss heuristic methodology, research method, and ethical considerations. The third chapter describes my findings which consist of three themes: embodiment, attachment, and grief and letting go. The final discussion chapter summarises the findings, and ties together insights and understandings from the theory to EFT.

Since I was young, I have loved interacting with horses. My parents, losing hope that it was a passing phase, eventually allowed me to have my own horse. I have gone through seasons of ownership and riding but it is a constant in my life and when I cannot access it I feel the absence keenly. I noticed how nothing else seems to exist while I am with horses; the sense of calm and mindfulness seems inherently catching to my often over-active mind. In addition to my love for horses, I have always loved attending therapy; I find the opportunity to be heard, reflect, grow, and understand myself extremely gratifying and rewarding. Since beginning my training as a psychotherapist, I was interested in experiencing all different formats of therapy. I have had 5-years of psychotherapy and had reached a point where I wanted to move away from over-analytical cognitive processing to focus more on embodiment and historical dissociation, and to work on my capacities of mindfulness and 'being.' It was suggested that a more somatic form of therapy could be beneficial in working with these realms. EFT seemed to fit the bill and, as a bonus, was a context I already enjoyed. I therefore looked forward to utilising EFT to further my therapeutic growth and development. Due to these personal motivations, I feel I was able to fully experience the EFT as opposed to engaging for the purposes of research, which may lend itself more to observing myself doing the therapy rather than being in it. Ozertugrul (2015) has written about the process of being both 'I-researcher' and 'I-participant' in the heuristic self-enquiry process, and I will be taking guidance from this method to ensure the data are accessible and authentic. I will strive for constancy to the data through reflexivity; accountability through supervision; and adhering to processes of cultural safety, citation, and referencing in my writing using APA 7 guidelines, as well as presenting the research to an academic standard.

EFT is still a relatively new field of practice and research in the history of psychotherapy and the literature is limited. The aim of this heuristic research is to add the direct client voice and experience to the literature. This study is not looking to determine the efficacy of, or claim anything about, EFT but is simply an in-depth report and exploration of one client experience.

The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA, 2009) model is the most commonly practiced modality (Tetreault, 2006); however, EAGALA covers many different types of equine-assisted learning and growth, not necessarily or exclusively psychotherapeutic. For the scope of this dissertation, I was purposefully interested in psychotherapeutic EFT with a humanistic and, specifically, person-centered theoretical orientation for two reasons. First, this is the modality within which I understand others and myself, and second, it forms the context in which I hope to be practicing in the future. This research is conducted in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, over 2022 and 2023.

Chapter 1: Initial Engagement

To address the research question 'what is the experience of online video-calling equine-assisted therapy?', I used a combination and adaptation of Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research methodology and Sela-Smiths's (2002) extension of that original conception in heuristic self-search inquiry. Moustakas developed this qualitative research method in order to assist researchers to shed light on, as he and a colleague put it: "the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39). Moustakas (1990) asserted there are eight distinct phases of heuristic enquiry the researcher must traverse: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. The phases are not necessarily linear, mutually exclusive, or only experienced and drawn from once. To reflect my process, I will detail the elements of my initial engagement with the research question. This includes my background and reverie about the topic; initial ethical considerations for engaging in EFT; and a literature review which contextualises and critically evaluates the theoretical foundations of EFT, the existing research, and issues of terminology in the field of equine-related therapies.

The research tentatively indicates EFT as having therapeutic benefit to a wider range of demographics than the traditional talk-therapy format (Hallberg, 2018). Thus, I was drawn to reflect on my experiences of EFT as I felt it had the potential as a therapeutic modality to be utilised more frequently in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am passionate about the cause of increasing societal accessibility to therapy, and understand there are mental health barriers, cultural, and emotional histories clients hold where speaking is not the preferred or most comfortable method of processing. EFT is an experiential, moment to moment, somatic form of therapeutic intervention which has tentatively demonstrated therapeutic benefit to clients whose emotions and traumas are inaccessible to linguistic explication, stored in bodily and experiential memory (Stern, 1997; Van der Kolk, 2014).

While working as a peer supporter in an Oranga Tamariki (government child welfare) residential home, I encountered adolescents with behavioural difficulties who struggled to process and verbalise emotions due to extensive trauma histories. This population appeared uncomfortable in clinical spaces such as traditional therapy offices, possibly because adolescents who have had professional healthcare assessments associate these settings with catalysing major, often traumatic, life changes (Donaghy, 2006; Ewing et al., 2007). I also worked in a clinical placement with an elderly population for whom talking about difficult feelings was taboo most of their lives. In my limited experience as a beginning therapist, to have already come across several

populations for whom experiential intervention may have been preferable and more effective than the traditional talk-therapy format, indicates a need for alternative modalities.

In finding a practitioner with whom I could undertake EFT, it was important to me to search for someone who practiced within the modality I am familiar with, through both my own therapy, training, and practice. Working within a familiar paradigm would allow quicker, more seamless integration and possibly explication. Therefore, I excluded from my search practitioners who primarily identified their practice with EAGALA. EFT is not widely practiced in Aotearoa New Zealand, and it was difficult to find a practitioner whose ethos aligned with a psychotherapeutic lens, worked with adults, and had availability for my schedule. Moreover, I was unable to find anyone who met these criteria and practiced psychotherapy or was registered with the Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ). However, the paradigm, ethos, and safety of practice—which, as a therapist, I felt confident in assessing myself—was more important in terms of a congruent therapy experience than a particular identity and registration with the responsible authority for psychotherapists. The EFT practitioner I worked with is a registered counsellor.

I engaged in EFT in a post-COVID-19 world. During lockdown conditions, telehealth became the only option for many clinicians and mental health services to continue operation. Where the practice of telehealth pre-COVID existed, but was uncommon, the field had to suddenly adapt. Consequently, telehealth is now more widely utilised. Such a deviation from the standard therapeutic frame has become the subject of much research and discourse (e.g., Markowitz et al., 2020). An increased personal comfort with telehealth, both as a provider and client through COVID-19, as well as the limitations of therapist attributes and availability, informed the extenuating circumstances and reasoning behind choosing a practitioner who was able to practice EFT via online video-calling.

Considering the ethical implications of this research question was also part of my initial engagement phase. I consulted with the EFT practitioner about ethical issues and technicalities and sought consultation with an AUT ethics advisor as to whether an ethics application was needed for this research. The outcome of these consultations are discussed next. Further ethical considerations for myself, future client-practitioner relationships, and my frame of reference are discussed in Chapter Two.

Ethical Considerations Regarding the Client-Practitioner Relationship

An Auckland University of Technology research ethics advisor was consulted regarding this research. They advised that given consent to use the sessions is granted by the practitioner, it is ethically appropriate to reflect on my interactions with the practitioner, as they are my reflections. It was my duty to ensure the practitioner could not be identified in the findings.

Before entering EFT, I discussed with the practitioner and gained verbal consent that they understood I may go on to use reflections from my experience of EFT to form the basis of a heuristic dissertation. Once it was determined from a few sessions that the EFT was a good 'fit' for both myself and the practitioner, I sought written consent for the same (Appendix A) and provided an information sheet about the research project (Appendix B). I consulted with the practitioner to change some wording on the form to what they felt more accurately reflected and was congruent with their practice. I also included the statement that the practitioner would not be identified in any way in the writing and presentation of this dissertation.

Due to legal regulations around terminology and registration particular to Aotearoa New Zealand, my practitioner was clear that they could not be written about, implied to be practicing or advertising equine-facilitated psychotherapy. The title of psychotherapist is legally protected in Aotearoa New Zealand, applicable only if the practitioner is registered with the Psychotherapy Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ). My practitioner was accredited with New Zealand Association of Counsellors. For this reason, in consultation with the practitioner, it was agreed to use the terminology 'practitioner' and 'EFT' in the write up of this dissertation.

There are ethical implications for reporting on the relationship between 'I-participant/researcher' and the practitioner. I strove to stay as close as possible to my experience internally and with the horse(s) rather than with the practitioner. I considered that in the worst-case scenario, where I had a negative experience with the EFT, I would still aim to keep my reflections based around my personal experience and would seek advice and feedback from my supervisor about how best to proceed with the research project. I also considered that in the unlikely event that the EFT practitioner withdrew consent for their involvement in this research, I would omit any mention, examination, or exploration of the interactions between practitioner and client (myself) in the write up. I anticipated this to be possible as the focus of the therapy is on the interactions between horse and client, and the practitioner acts as a facilitator of the client-horse relationship.

Animal Ethics

Once I had decided to reflect on my experience of EFT for a heuristic dissertation, the technicalities of ethical principles in terms of animal involvement were also important to consider. To engage in EFT for the purpose of research could be conceptualised as setting out to do research with an animal. In this instance, ethical approval from the University of Auckland Animal Ethics committee prior to beginning the research may have been required. However, I did not engage with EFT for the purpose of research; I sought out EFT for personal reasons and had already decided to engage before considering a focus for my dissertation. Therefore, it was ethically appropriate to reflect on my experience after receiving EFT as the basis of heuristic research. Furthermore, an AUT research ethics advisor confirmed with the Animal Welfare Officer that if any interaction with the horse is exclusively what is typical in the therapy session, and the research focuses on the responses of the client and not the horse, no animal ethics approval is required.

Literature Review

Moustakas' (1990) original method of heuristic research includes a literature review to broadly contextualise the present inquiry, including the topic's significance, findings, and methodological issues of previous research; as well as to present the existing knowledge. However, Tudor (2022) made the point that due to the prioritising of subjectivity in heuristic philosophy, we can "take this license as a freedom to roam in the literature" (p. 71) and can make up part of the initial engagement with the topic. I undertook the literature review once my EFT experience concluded in order to absorb and immerse myself in knowledge so that it could percolate in my reverie about the topic as it is currently understood in literature and psychotherapy theory. Tudor also pointed out that this would constitute an initial literature view, with the re-view of the literature occurring most likely after the experiencing, in the explication phase. My literature view method was similar to Grennell's (2014), where I followed sources and references from within books and articles according to relevance, intuition, and interest.

Theoretical Foundations and Practice of EFT

EFT was developed and extended from what was referred to as the 'riding for the disabled' movement which, from 1969, was recognising that equine-assisted activities demonstrated significant therapeutic improvement of physical, mental, and emotional issues (Dorotik, 2011; McCullough et al., 2015). In Aotearoa New Zealand, EFT was established around 23-years ago; yet is still not widely practiced or known about.

EFT integrates the client's experience of being with horses, facilitated by a practitioner, to promote emotional growth and therapeutic change. It is usually a short-term, experiential therapy, and has a broadly humanistic philosophy that, given a facilitative environment, clients can find their own answers, overcome difficulties, and find healthier solutions for themselves, both intra-psychically and relationally (Hallberg, 2018).

Horses have been likened to "our mirrors, as their response to us reflects what our presence tells them" (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007, p. 530). In EFT, there is greater value placed on non-verbal communication as this is the primary method horses use to communicate with each other. The focus on non-verbal communication can increase a sense of embodiment and is suited to a wider variety of demographics than traditional talk-therapy formats (EAGALA, 2010). Due to the non-verbal interaction with animals, clients must use their own words and feelings to explore what has happened in the session, increasing self-reflection that is quite separate to the feedback or thoughts of the practitioner.

Frewin and Gardiner (2005) suggested that horses are highly sensitive and attuned to their environment and social dynamics due to being prey animals. Horses can attune to and enact relational microcosms, providing a smaller representation of a client's external attachment relationships and patterns in the way they relate to others. Within these microcosms, interactions between horse and client provide practice and learning in relating to others. The horse-client interaction provides a relationally lower-stakes and more neutral canvas on which to explore projections, transference, and enactments. Clients who are relationally traumatised may feel emotionally safer in the horse-client interaction, where they may otherwise have held back honest reactions and feelings in a client-practitioner dyad to avoid the threat of rupture. Utilising here-and-now interactions with the horse, within a supportive, nonjudgmental, and trusting relationship, allows safe processing of relational patterns and historical events, finding and experiencing authenticity at a distance that avoids re-traumatisation (Lac et al., 2013; Parent, 2016; Parish-Plass, 2013). Schultz (2005) suggested this practice of dynamic exploration can be more easily transferred to the practitioner-client dyad and responded to in a tangible way. The facilitating practitioner notes clients' responses to the horses, reflects and processes them with the client, and "encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning and reflection, sets boundaries, and ensures physical and emotional safety" (Darling, 2014, p. 24).

Authenticity and 'realness' are crucial components to therapeutic success, especially with populations who are difficult to engage in traditional therapy formats and processes (Gullo et al., 2012; Hurley et al., 2013; Yalom, 2003). There is also an inherent healing benefit of being in nature

(Louv, 2008, 2012; Selhub & Logan, 2012). It is theorised that an oxytocin boost from interacting calmly with animals, effects not only the client's response to the animal but also the client's response to other humans, and may contribute to the reported experience of stronger therapeutic alliances built between client and practitioner when in the presence of animals (Stewart et al., 2013). A farm-based or outdoor setting has a less clinical feeling than traditional talk therapy settings and may be felt as less stigmatising. The practitioner in EFT settings is likely wearing casual clothing and interacting with other staff and animals; therefore providing some level of natural self-disclosure, which promotes trust and closer relationship through authenticity. Knowing information about the practitioner through self-disclosure could interfere or deprive clients of exploring fantasies about the practitioner (Lemma, 2015). For instance, observing how the practitioner interacts with others or animals could have implications for how the client perceives the practitioner in relation to their own schema about others or animals. However, the less formal farm setting can provide a greater feeling of collaboration and mutual respect between all parties (Carlsson et al., 2014).

Existing Research

In the last 20-years there has been research on the EFT modality, including that of practitioners' perceptions and experiences providing EFT (Lee et al., 2016; McCullough et al., 2015; Selby & Smith-Osborne, 2013) and empirical quantitative research on the efficacy of EFT (Dell et al., 2011; Stiltner, 2013; Whitely, 2009). Literature reviews of studies to date have revealed some evidence for the efficacy of EFT; however, these findings have been considered preliminary as most of the studies involved have methodological issues that impact the quality and validity of data (Hallberg, 2018; Lee et al., 2016), a finding which is "supported by nearly every systemic or literature review conducted to date" (Hallberg, 2018, p. 91).

Defining and combining treatment types causes methodological issues in that the qualification of practitioners, presenting concerns of clients, and design of the client-horse interactions are not clearly defined or operationalised (Lee et al., 2016; Whalen & Case-Smith, 2012). In addition, there seems to be confusion in combining therapy and non-therapy services to treat physical and mental health conditions; or, more concerning, using non-therapy services such as equine-assisted learning, which are completely different in design and implementation to therapy services to treat both mental and physical conditions (Duncan et al., 2014; Ewing et al., 2007; Hallberg, 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015).

There is a notable lack of control groups in existing research; or where there is a control group, it lacks similarity to the experimental group. For example, the client experience of farm-based EFT compared to client experience in-office counselling. The variable differences are many, so it becomes more difficult to determine which factor the differences in experience can be ascribed to. A more comparable control group would be conducting talk-therapy in a farm-based setting but without the horse interaction. Despite the poor comparability of control and experimental groups, studies often imply a causal relationship between EFT interventions and positive treatment outcomes. There are also issues with controlling variables, such as whether participants used EFT alongside traditional therapies or as a stand-alone intervention (Pauw, 2000), or whether participants were already familiar with horses or the farm-based milieu, making it difficult to determine if EFT was the reason for symptom improvement (Hallberg, 2018).

Hallberg (2018) noted that there may be practitioner-researcher bias in the existing literature and research, in that the researcher's own passion for horses or EFT may influence the research design, unconsciously or consciously influence the interpretation of data to support the efficacy of EFT and their work, and, therefore, influence the outcomes of research. Researcher-practitioners interviewing their clients for data also has the potential for similar bias pitfalls. The practitioner-researcher may unintentionally influence the client to provide more positive feedback than was actually experienced due to the power differential between practitioner and client, and the possibility that the practitioner has unconsciously conveyed their hopes for positive treatment outcomes. A way to counter this bias is for researchers to use self-disclosure to record the personal biases of the researcher, to enable readers to interpret the results from the researcher's unique perspective (Mehra, 2002; Rooney, 2005), as well as personal reflection and using supervision with peers and professionals to address these biases. Thus, heuristic research is particularly suited to exploring EFT and adding to the existing literature.

Results from the few quantitative studies are considered somewhat lacklustre due to "the inability or unwillingness of participants to answer questions truthfully, as they are a group that is tested often, are familiar with testing, and are motivated to answer quickly so that they can move on to more engaging activities" (Darling, 2014, p. 32). A large proportion of the available knowledge base is dependent on qualitative research presented in theses and dissertations (Lee et al., 2016). For example, using thematic analysis of small-scale study interviews, Tipton (2014) explored equine assisted psychotherapists' and counsellors' perceptions of the benefits of the modality. Darling (2014) noted that "the research that exists is widely varied among types of treatment groups, therapeutic interventions, and outcome measures" (p. 37) and "paints a small

picture of various, specific uses for the human-horse relationship through many, varied forms of therapy" (p. 26).

Terminology

The literature in this field further lacks clarity stemming from issues with inconsistent terminology. Hallberg (2018) identified 63 different terms to describe broadly therapeutic interactions between humans and horse which are often used interchangeably to describe the same or different services. Standardised terminology is important for clarity in research, legitimising the profession, as well as ensuring optimal well-being and treatment outcomes for clients. It also allows easier auditing of quality of services and promotes shared understanding of services across countries and cultures (Hallberg, 2018).

According to Hallberg (2018), there are a few terms relevant to the type of service I received. The term *equine-assisted therapy* refers to *any* therapeutic activity, physical, occupational, speech, or mental health therapy that includes the use of horses. *Equine-assisted mental health* and *equine-assisted psychotherapy* are often used interchangeably to broadly speak about including horses and the farm milieu in mental health services, provided by licensed professionals who may use a variety of approaches. *Equine-facilitated psychotherapy* is an approach where the licensed mental health professional "views the horse as a sentient co-facilitator. Activities are steeped in mindfulness-based practices... [and] is usually depth and insight oriented" (Hallberg, 2018, p. 8).

The strength and therapeutic benefit of human-animal bonds has a significant impact on everyday life and well-being, and can facilitate accessing and working with trauma, attachment, and relational issues (Sable, 2012). Within the small literature, there is very little involving direct client experience reflecting on the process of the EFT, and none on EFT via online video-calling. I hope my research can add to the already existing body of research as the experiential voice of the client.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Method

In this chapter I discuss the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the heuristic methodology and the paradigm it is situated within; critically evaluate and explore the justifications for choosing this methodology—personally, in relation to the topic, and as it relates to psychotherapy; and outline Moustakas' (1990) and Sela-Smith's (2002) key concepts of heuristic research and its limitations. I will be following and detailing Moustakas' phases of research, and Sela-Smith's development on this method to limit heuristic exploration to the self rather than involving co-participants or researchers. Finally, I discuss the ethical implications of this heuristic study.

Methodology

Theoretical Underpinnings of Heuristic Inquiry

Examining self-experience elucidates data that can be used to "discover the nature and meaning of the experience... for further investigation and analysis" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Openness to exploring what may come forward contrasts with other quantitative and positivist methodologies that are concerned with objectivity and discovering some 'truth,' testing of a hypothesis, or discovering a cause-and-effect relationship based on sensory observation (Carson, et al., 2001).

Heuristic methodology is interpretivist in its paradigm in that it aims to understand subjective human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontologically it infers that reality is constructed in individual minds; therefore, there are many possible realities based on perceptions that are specific to time and context (Edirisingha, 2012).

Philosophically, heuristic methodology draws influence from the humanistic tradition. Humanism broadly values individual human nature and experiences, apprehends the person and their potential towards actualisation (Maslow, 1956) holistically, and with an implicit trust that a person can, with the right conditions and facilitation, find wisdom, growth, healing, and fulfilment through themselves (Kirk et al., 2015). Moustakas (1990) named Jourard's (1968, 1971) work on self-disclosure; Polanyi's (1964, 1966, 1969) work on the tacit dimension, indwelling, knowing, and being; Buber's (1958, 1961, 1965) work on dialogue explorations and mutuality; and Roger's (1969) work on human science as humanistic influences in the development of the concept of heuristic research.

Sela-Smith (2002) claimed that Moustakas' (1990) original methodology shifted from purely heuristic questioning of the self to a more phenomenological approach which included the perspectives of others, which she asserted distances and distracts from the researcher's internal process. However, in contrast to heuristic methodological ideal, the current study was a time-limited and structured exploration.

Why Heuristic Methodology for Psychotherapy Research, This Topic, and Me

Rose and Loewenthal (2006) claimed that heuristic methodology is well suited to studying psychotherapy practice in that it provides a logical framework to explore the "lived experience of therapy" (p. 138) from the therapist or client perspective. The use of the self for "exploration and interpretation of experience" (Hiles, 2001) is a familiar concept for therapists who are trained in disciplined, critical reflexivity and self-discovery as part of psychotherapy practise and theory. As Tudor (2022) pointed out, this makes heuristic research "arguably, the method of psychological research closest to the practice of therapy" (p. 57). Heuristic research, when executed authentically and congruently, can encourage researchers to practise both doing and being in a way that is consistent with the meaning, philosophy, and purpose of psychotherapy (Tudor, 2022).

Heuristic research also seems particularly suited to the exploration of experiences in equine-assisted therapy as it is an experiential therapy and, similarly, has a broadly humanistic philosophy that given a facilitative environment clients can find their own answers, overcome difficulties, and find healthier solutions for themselves, both intra-psychically and relationally (Hallberg, 2018). The practice of the EFT practitioner I worked with was influenced by a Gestalt model of therapy, which also falls under the humanistic umbrella and emphasises the value of here-and-now felt experiences (Lac et al., 2013; Notgrass & Pettinelli, 2014). This model asserts that my experiences and resultant feelings, thoughts, and insights are my own, and inherently valuable without needing input, comparison, or analysis from the EFT practitioner and their experience of my therapy. This idea is supported by Sela-Smith (2002) who stated that "validity of the self-experience is established by similar experiences of others; yet validity in subjective discovery-research is not possible by comparing to others" (p. 76). I did not interview others about their experiences of EFT, so the self-search enquiry framework provided an appropriate model within which to situate researching and collecting data from my experiences and responses during EFT.

Personally, I was drawn to the aspects of heuristic research that emphasise journaling, self-reflection, embodiment, and resonance; historically, this has flowed most naturally for me in any writing task and is a growth edge for me in my professional and personal life. Thus, I kept a written and voice-note journal for purposes of heuristic data collection throughout this process. My hope was that having some internal theoretical consistency between methodology, model of EFT practice, and my personal philosophical leaning and lens from which I understand and express my experiences, would allow me to yield data with as much clarity as possible from which to draw synthesis. In relation to choosing heuristics for this topic and myself, I resonated with Moustakas' (1990) assertion that

> in heuristics, an unshakable connection exists between what is out there... and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness. It is I ...who see[s] and understand[s] something, freshly, as if for the first time; I who come[s] to know essential meanings inherent in my experience. (p. 4)

Why Not Other Methodologies?

Sela-Smith's (2002) iteration of heuristic self-inquiry can be viewed as differing from other traditionally phenomenological methods, as phenomenological research uses 'bracketing,' a kind of psychological distancing or compartmentalising of prior assumptions in order to apprehend the phenomena more objectively (Mihalache, 2019). Epistemologically, interpretivist paradigms infer that knowledge is constructed both subjectively and intersubjectively (Carson, et al., 2001).

Heuristic self-enquiry does not attempt objectivity but asserts that information about the phenomena can be exposed through the researcher's subjective exploration of their own experience. Instead of self-reflection being a preparation for bracketing to study a phenomenon, in heuristic research constant self-reflection is necessary to allow the *person* to remain in focus (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985) *in relation* to the phenomena, and "imagination, intuition, self-reflection and the tacit dimension in the search for knowledge" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39) to shift and change throughout the process. Mihalache (2019) stated "Heuristic Inquiry (HI) cannot be considered a phenomenological approach precisely because the aim in HI seems to be the continued personal transformation of the researcher, rather than the description of a phenomenon" (p. 144). A phenomenological approach could be more appropriate once the researcher has a clearer sense of what the experience might be.

A hermeneutic literature review may have been a feasible method for this research question. However, after reviewing several systematic and literature reviews (Bachi, 2012; Carlsson, 2016; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Lee et al., 2016; Smith-Osborne & Selby, 2010) there appeared to be very few studies exploring the client experience of EFT in relation to addressing mental health. Powell (2013) identified only three that focussed exclusively on the client experience; one was a narrative phenomenological study exploring EFT experiences of five clients between ages of 13 and 30 years(Peterson, 2010), one included interviews with five female survivors of sexual abuse who experienced EFT (Meinersmann et al., 2008), and a phenomenological study explored the experiences of 10 at-risk adolescents (Hayden, 2005). There are some studies investigating EFT practitioners' thoughts, opinions, and experiences of providing EFT, and second-hand reporting of their clients' feedback about their experiences. However, the direct client voice seems to be largely missing in the literature. McConnell (2010) found that effectiveness of EFT was mostly measured by therapist analysis and psychometric questionnaires to determine symptom reduction. I acknowledge that my experience as both a client and therapist is likely different to the general population, but I am also in a unique position to bring the voice of the client forward with less complications around confidentiality, as I am both researcher and participant, and have full agency over the process. My desire for an experiential research project and contributing diversity to the existing literature steered me towards the heuristic method for this question.

The method of thematic analysis encounters a similar logistical problem with my research question, as there are very few studies centred on client experience from the client perspective, from which to conduct a thematic analysis. In addition, as Tipton (2014) has already conducted a thematic analysis of interviews from EFT practitioners on the benefits, drawbacks, and practitioners' experiences of providing EFT, I considered that a second study using thematic analysis would be less of a valuable addition to the literature than a direct exploration of client experience.

Essential Concepts of Heuristic Research

Moustakas (1990) defined seven key concepts in conducting heuristic research, and Sela-Smith (2002) refined, clarified, and explicated six; two of which are distinct additions to Moustakas' original conceptualisation. Sela-Smith asserted that a crucial foundation of heuristic study is that the researcher has self-experience with what is being researched; that it is not simply a hypothetical exercise in thinking and wondering about something external to the self.

Identifying with the focus of enquiry involves "getting inside the question, becoming one with it, and thus achieving an understanding of it" (Moustakas 1990 p. 7) from an inverted perspective (Salk, 1983). For me, this 'inverted perspective' came in the form of imagining what it would be like to experience EFT, what feelings (or not) I might come across, what felt 'in the moment' experiences I might have (or not), and what this could mean for me in my personal growth and development. I had an intense interest in trying out a new experience within the cross-section of the fields for which I find great meaning and passion.

Moustakas (1990) cited self-dialogue as the critical beginning step to engaging with heuristic research, and for the phenomenon to be questioned by one's own experience in a back-and-forth conversation until multiple meanings are revealed. Self-dialogue requires a "willingness to enter a process rooted in the self" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 8) and borrows from Jourard's (1971) concept of self-disclosure in "making yourself manifest, showing yourself so others can perceive you" (p. 19). It involves the self-disclosure of the internal process, thought, and response, including questioning where thoughts come from, asking them to explore and reveal more (Moustakas, 1990). An example of my self-dialogue in approaching the topic for a research question is the back-and-forth around my desire to explore the cross-section of two fields I am passionate and knowledgeable about. On the one hand, I considered the question's potential to add to the research, modality, and my own clinical toolbox of helping people therapeutically. On the other, I questioned whether this desire was borne of a selfish want to fit it into my own life and interests, a way to financially justify an extra course of therapy for myself which I enjoy, as well as hope that writing would be easier if it included a topic that I have significant knowledge about already (the behaviours and dynamics between horses and people), with client well-being as secondary or worse, inconsequential. I settled on the idea that both could have influence.

Tacit knowing implies that something can be understood as a whole, including its essential 'essence,' from consciously apprehending individual qualities or aspects together—also known as the subsidiary element (Polyani, 1964) of tacit knowledge—combined with a felt sense of 'knowing' or 'hunch' which is unseeable—also known as the focal (Polyani 1964) or implicit (Moustakas, 1990) elements of tacit knowledge. We may not know exactly *how* we know something; for example, recognising a face out of millions (Moustakas 1990) and it is, therefore, not totally grasped in a conscious way or easily expressed in words. Tacit knowing from the combination of subsidiary and focal factors allows the creation and understanding of whole experiences, such as completing tasks, "determin[ing] the meaning of a person's outlook or prevailing attitude" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13), being able to find our way in the metaphorical dark

by locating ourselves in time and space in relation to other things and the meaning that comes from this locating, and to plan and decide on our next moves using speculative skills that tacit knowledge informs (Moustakas, 1990). Sela-Smith (2002) suggested that one must reach inwards for tacit awareness and knowledge, a focused attention that results in the researcher's feeling responses and 'experiencing "I" that makes continual comparison of the outer world with the inner knowledge base to evaluate what is "out there" against what is "in here"' (p. 61). Feeling provides the door and heuristic inquiry provides the key to reach inwards, to apprehend the interior I; the intentional, subjective, and largely unexplored source of tacit knowledge (Sela-Smith, 2002). In relation to the chosen topic, I had some tacit knowing that EFT could be a therapeutically enriching and valuable experience both for myself and the greater population. This tacit knowledge, before any reading on the subject, was not informed by research or academic articles. Rather, I had a hunch that there was much to be excavated and noticed further, and on a deeper level, than my casually therapeutic interactions with horses that I have accumulated throughout my life.

Intuition is described as the bridge between tacit knowledge, observable and describable, or explicit knowledge. Once practiced and perceptiveness honed, intuited knowledge can be immediately available from clues put together or patterns that can be sensed, imagined, and then characterised as the "reality, state of mind, or condition" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). An intuited and perceived whole can then allow "necessary shifts in method, procedure, direction and understanding which will add depth, substance, and essential meanings to the discovery process" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). I, personally, am still in the process of learning to trust my intuition; therefore, I expected to need careful attention and additional time to recognise and become cognisant of intuitive insights throughout my experience of EFT and the heuristic research process.

Indwelling involves a conscious and deliberate turning inward, with intense focus and attention to the experience, remaining with it, returning to it repeatedly, in order to understand it as fully as possible, "expanding meaning and associations until a fundamental insight is achieved" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Moustakas (1990) described indwelling as a painstaking process, the heavy lifting of heuristic research, necessary to move towards creative synthesis. I anticipated some level of indwelling throughout my experience of EFT; but that the bulk of indwelling would likely occur once I had terminated the therapy, and began to reflect, synthesise, and draw out insights from the accumulated journal and voice note entries recorded after every session.

Moustakas' (1990) concept of focusing is inspired by Gendlin's (1978) therapeutic technique of the same name. Described as an essential pause and slowing down, focusing creates

an internal clearing away to be able to notice thoughts and feelings that can clarify a question, "tap[ping] into the essence of what matters, and set aside peripheral qualities or feelings" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16) that allows the possibility of a felt sense of internal shifting or changing. In addition, Sela-Smith (2002) stated the researcher must uphold the validity; striving to remain in contact with self-experience and the true essence of a self-search, the "I-who-feels" (p. 76), and avoiding becoming observational about the idea of the experience in the methodological process outlined by Moustakas). Historically, I have struggled with the practice of focusing. It was a major theme in my first clinical practice paper and I remember feeling quite alienated, like I did not 'get' it or was unable to feel what I was 'supposed' to be feeling. I have experienced what I believe is a 'felt sense' in conscious focus practice only a few times, and have not yet experienced a 'shift or change.' I hoped that EFT and exploring my experience of it in the heuristic endeavour would help develop these skills.

The internal frame of reference refers to the "phenomenal world of the experiencing person" (Moustakas, 1990, p.12), or their position of self in relation to environment, history, time and space, and the sum of their experiencing self to date. Moustakas (1990) stressed that knowing one's internal frame of reference is essential for heuristic research, as the validity of noticing, examining, and documenting depends on ability to discern how the new experiences fit into the already existing frame—identifying what is new, what changes, what is different and how—to be able to "validly provide portrayals of the experience" (p. 17). I discuss my internal frame of reference in relation to the research topic within the ethics section.

Sela-Smith (2002) added the concept of resistance to Moustakas' (1990) original components of heuristic research. She asserted that Moustakas was unable to see and, therefore, work with his own psychological resistance and surrender to the interior self-search. Hence, some essential blind spots were not able to be explored to yield potentially valuable data. Moustakas moved from 'I-who-feels' to 'observing of the self responding to feeling' when examining interior experience of the question, which arguably led to methodological ambivalence and "sent him on another search outside his feeling-self that became a heuristic inquiry in psychology, not a self-search inquiry" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 84).

Sela-Smith (2002) also explored the idea that the process of heuristic inquiry requires a certain amount of surrender to the unknown rather than meticulous planning and controlled progression through the stages. The researcher must retain integrity and relinquish control to find what the particular stage is offering. Listening to "what is calling out from the inside of the self to be understood" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 64) allows the researcher to become aware of what is felt

and the experience of being. This shift to make conscious the felt experience contributes to a combination of self-understanding and growth which can result in self-transformation. Self-transformation is a further addition that Sela-Smith extrapolated from Moustakas' (1990) method, stating that "when a story is formed with the embedded wholes of the transformation in it, the story itself contains the power to transform anyone who dares to surrender to the listening" (p. 64). To create the story, the researcher must allow the question to take a life of its own internally, so that the essence of the phenomenon can be comprehensively expressed and realised.

Limitations and Critiques of Heuristic Research

Polyani's (1964) concept of tacit knowing, which forms the basis for an important concept of Moustakas' (1990) method, has been critiqued as being disjointed and inconsistent. The crux of the critique is that tacit knowledge is understood as ultimately unknowable and nearing impossible to rationally investigate, much less articulate (Fuller, 1993). While perhaps not able to be consciously examined, explicated, and made tangible in a write up, I maintain it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the potential existence and influence of this tacit dimension on the heuristic research process, and subsequent data yielded from it. It is important in terms of scientific rigour to use every concept or tool available to turn over every stone in aid of presenting the fullest, richest data from experience.

Another critique of heuristic inquiry is that it can be overly self-conscious or self-referential and, therefore, lacking generalisable impact or relevance. Sela-Smith (2002) asserted that while including co-researchers' perspectives could distract and detract from the researcher's internal process, they could also potentially help identify unconscious areas of resistance. Resistance is seemingly related to the criticism of bias in heuristic research in that the researcher may only notice what they are unconsciously motivated to find in order to aid the research or to reinforce their own pre-existing narrative or personal belief about the subject. Reason and Rowan (1981) and Rose and Loewenthal (2006) suggested that support and cross-examination during data analysis of heuristic research is essential to apprehend these blind spots. Doing so would enrich the findings and go some way to counter or reign in the excesses of overly self-referential internal exploration.

However, including reflections on my experience from the EFT practitioner could conflict with the underlying phenomenology of my particular EFT, as previously discussed in the introductory chapter. We were both present at the point of my experiencing, so would each have our own unique understanding of what happened, why, and what meaning it could have.

However, due to the inherent power imbalance between practitioner and client, there is risk I overvalue and internalise the practitioner's reflection into my own experience; external input could interfere with or temper the clarity of my intuitive knowing and understanding of my experience. For this reason, I opted to exclude the potential of acquiring reflections from my EFT practitioner.

To mitigate the muddying of waters exploring client-practitioner reflections could create, but still have some way to help illuminate blind-spots, I utilised supervision to expose any biases and resistance that become apparent in my write up. I anticipated this to be achievable as I value authenticity and transparency in all aspects of life, and like to think I am open to unconscious avoidance being facilitated into consciousness in order to understand and broaden knowledge of my experiences.

It is claimed that to restrict the unfolding heuristic process to a time-limited dissertation context potentially hampers the capacity or ability to "free-fall surrender to the process" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 70) and, therefore, jeopardises the possibility of genuine deep transformation, which Moustakas (1990) asserted requires "endless hours of sustained immersion" (p. 14). It could also be argued that life itself is time-limited, and limited experiences can still be valuable and transformative regardless of following the pure heuristic ideology. To my mind, it is worth exploring this possibility.

Method

I framed the research in terms of Moustakas' (1990) phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. I have discussed and illustrated the phase of initial engagement in the introductory chapter.

The immersion phase had two parts. Initially, it involved engaging with and attending the EFT sessions. I used journalling, reflective self-inquiry, and self-dialogue, as well as audio recording voice notes immediately after the EFT session to reflect on my experiences and the themes that were in my life at the time. I found the voice note format to be particularly evocative, speaking aloud, semi-free associating with my thoughts and feelings in the privacy of my car, in the transitional space between EFT and being at home. It was a form of literal self-dialogue; and because I was dually focussed on driving, the associations and narrative became freer flowing, where I sometimes felt the journalling to be limited to recounting and description.

In the incubation stage, I did not engage with these recordings again until I began writing. I allowed the experience of EFT to sit and percolate in the background, without conscious

examination. I finished EFT in December, and then took a break over January to let everything settle. I started writing the less experiential aspects of my dissertation, such as methodology, ethics, and literature review, between February to April. I found this part of incubation difficult, and had to consciously reassure myself that though conscious explication was not occurring, important processing and integration of the experience was happening in the background of my mind. After EFT termination and thinking about my experience during the incubation stage, I came up with only emptiness and resulting panic. What if nothing came to me for months? What if some internal dynamic process locked away access to my feelings about what I had experienced? I could not afford for this to happen due to the dissertation submission deadline. With some difficulty and internal push-pull battle to soothe anxiety, to allow this feeling space and "freefall surrender" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 70) to my sense of trust in myself, infant and on shaky legs as it was, that whatever needed to happen, would come to pass.

My experience of illumination occurred in various moments throughout the heuristic process rather than in its own phase (Tudor, 2010).

> An Illumination: Surprisingly, three themes popped into my head as I slipped into unconsciousness before sleep one evening, before I had viewed my recordings: embodiment, attachment, grief and letting go. "Brilliant,' I thought, "simple and congruent. I'll easily remember that," - which, of course, I didn't as I did not jot down those important thoughts before sleep.

Over the next few weeks, I again tried to allow space rather than give in to pressurising anxiety. I recovered the two themes of embodiment and attachment, but could not remember the third. I was dunked back into the immersion phase anticipating writing the findings chapter. Before I collated the data or looked at the recordings since they were created, I noticed a sense of resistance over what I termed 'Schrodinger's findings.' While I had not yet looked at my recordings, I did not know if there would be anything to write about—I could find something, or I could find nothing much. This is a sentiment that others have shared when undertaking heuristic research (Etherington, 2004). I had a vague sense that my EFT sessions had been interesting to me, but nothing groundbreaking or especially powerful. Only time would tell, once I immersed myself in the data rather than seeing only the emotional distance I had been working from since the EFT sessions. I painstakingly typed out journal entries and verbatims of my long-winded post-EFT musings. It was emotionally difficult revisiting audio recordings where I was crying, but useful in the sense that I was viscerally placed back at the point of experience. Translating these to a typed verbatim took some time, with breaks for self-care to handle emotional overwhelm.

An Illumination: The theme of grief and letting go only came back to me right at the point of looking over my collated recordings, which felt like another instance of illumination. This made sense in hindsight, as I anticipated this to be the most evasive and difficult theme to write about. Some part of me resisted this illumination even still; “that can’t be it... I'm sure it was something more interesting and less obvious...” Perhaps my journey into grief was still too fresh, too wobbly new and infant, and wanted to avoid potentially invasive observation and analysis for a while longer, lending some credence to Sela-Smith's (2002) idea that it is difficult to conduct deep self-discovery if the process is determined by "time clock, a calendar,[or] procedural rules" (p. 70) such as the restraints of an academic dissertation, rather than a free-fall surrender to the process determining the phases.

The phase of explication and creative synthesis seemed to coincide and occur in tandem, and developed through a process of revisiting, refining, tweaking, and improving clarity. I took 2 weeks off work to revisit and grapple with the collated data when writing the findings chapter. At first, I noticed a resistance to re-examining the data with a cognitive and analytical lens, trying to ‘make sense of it’, as this seemed antithetical to the in-the-moment, non-verbal process of EFT and the gift and offering of that experience. I was left with some residual worry that looking at the data through lens for the purpose of writing academically would spoil the purity of the experience. I looked over the entirety of the collated journaling and verbatims in a meditative way, feeling into the experience and myself, immersing myself in the morass of emotions, thoughts, and feelings, soaking into my being and noticing to see what stood out, felt prominent, and powerful. Writing about embodiment and attachment was hard work though straightforward; however, I experienced a definite increase in resistance when writing about grief and letting go. Every sentence was like pulling teeth, despite knowing what I needed to do next. I experienced an increase in anxiety and overwhelm. The experience of thinking and writing was like forcing opposing magnets together, requiring great effort and tolerance of tension which, in turn, felt like it forced my attention or physical body away from writing to release. This dynamic in itself was an insight into how difficult but generative it was for me to wrestle with the elements of my grief. When I finished this section, I was exhausted and in pain, but proud and gratified. Like something that had grown inside me and needed to be birthed, to process, develop, and change.

The heuristic methodological process demonstrates how complex it is to study this type of experience. It is difficult to surrender to the learning because the brain takes over, and the experience has to be filtered through cognition in order to write. I am reminded of Polyani’s (1964) critique of tacit knowledge being unknowable, difficult to rationally explore, and resistant to explication and articulation. There is some conflict that cannot be avoided but only mitigated,

wherein the actual experience and learning feels diametrically opposed to thinking and writing coherently for academic pursuit. Perhaps the difficulty in this experience makes it all the more valuable and rare contribution to the literature.

Ethical Considerations

Heuristic research has some unique ethical implications that must be considered and held throughout the process. This chapter provides a critical evaluation of those implications for myself and those closely associated with me, the potential implications for future therapist-client relationships, and my own ethical frame of reference culturally and historically.

Ethical Considerations for Myself and Close Relationships

The heuristic process can be revealing of one's internal dynamics, and the implications for this level of self-disclosure to my mental health and well-being must be considered. Revealing deeply meaningful and potentially painful personal processes while being subject to critique, using academic language, and aiming for wider resonance, requires somewhat of a leap of faith (Ings, 2014) and psychological and emotional resilience. I did not know what this process might uncover; however, I intended to—and did—make use of personal therapy and supervision to keep in awareness how any dynamics to do with this process may play out. Romanyshyn (2007) suggested it is of ethical importance that the researcher continuously ask themselves if there is an underlying or unconscious meaning to the research question, to encourage the most rigour, validity, and authenticity of data, and increase likelihood of a genuine transformative heuristic process.

I have not typically been concerned about over-exposure of myself and my internal processes in terms of vulnerability, or sharing things that are sensitive or private. However, I wondered if I had a 'bad' experience of EFT whether it could reflect poorly on me as a therapist: could it imply I was not in tune with myself or reflective enough in a way I 'should' be, as a practicing mental health clinician? That despite indications that EFT is tentatively but broadly therapeutically beneficial (Hallberg, 2018; Tipton, 2014), my experience was incongruent with the literature, I 'didn't get it' and thus feel broken in some way? Is it possible I would unconsciously shape my experiences in order to avoid this outcome? At the same time, I was aware this could be similar to how a 'layman' client could feel if something that was supposed to help did not. Giving voice to this potential client experience could be a useful addition and reflection to the field and literature. I am also reminded of my feeling of alienation in class practicing focusing (Gendlin, 1978); and how despite being in a training environment that was implicitly judging my therapeutic

skills and reflexivity, and despite most of my peers having a congruent experience of focusing, I was still able to remain true and vocal about my differing experience. I hoped this intrinsically held valuing of authenticity and commitment to honesty of reporting, despite the risk, would serve me well in this heuristic process.

Disclosures about my internal world, dilemmas, patterns, history, and vulnerabilities could implicate people who are closely related to me in my own life. Even if nobody is identifiable, my disclosures could reveal something about interpersonal dynamics that involves someone else who might not be comfortable having shared history published, perhaps especially since it is my singular perspective. There is a tension in differences of cultural attitudes around this: in western and individualist cultures it is held that knowledge is also individual and should be available to all; whereas collectivist and Indigenous cultures hold that knowledge is earned and passed down via relationships with certain attached obligations (Jones, 1999). By the term western, I refer to the perception of a shared philosophical, political and religious worldview with heritage and influence of Christianity, which is generally European in geographical origin.

I found the Te Ara Tika ethical guidelines (Hudson et al., 2010) useful in framing, processing, and directing the consideration of ethics in relation to myself and those close to me. This framework was originally conceived in relation to Māori research. However, due to being developed in Aotearoa New Zealand and informed by the relationship of colonial and Indigenous dynamics, it is an appropriate and illuminating perspective to use for undertaking this research as a Pākehā woman on colonised lands. My experience of EFT was embedded in the natural environment. It is, therefore, appropriate to utilise an ethical model, borne of a Te Ao Māori worldview, that is an inherently stronger, more nuanced, and considered connection with the land than western-centric psychotherapeutic paradigms. Sensitive material about myself or others that may emerge could be considered tapu (restricted), and to begin to work with what is tapu, one must kia tūpato (be careful). Te Ara Tika (Hudson et al., 2010) recommends treating this material with aroha (care/awareness), and māhaki (respectful conduct) in order to minimise chances of causing spiritual or emotional harm. My own sense is that I have a right to report my experiences, but I should equally consider the impact it could have on the others my stories implicate and do my best to mitigate what others may feel is too exposing despite my own level of comfort.

Ethical Considerations for Myself in Future Client-Therapist Relationships

There is the implication for potential future clients out in the community. If they search for my dissertation, they may get to know a good deal more about my internal world than would have

been revealed in a usual therapy dyad. Jourard (1971) reflected on the impacts of self-disclosure of the writer on the reader. He claimed an authentic writer's self-disclosure aims to be as faithful to the actual experience; but that doing so runs the risk of reactions from others, and has important effects on both discloser and receiver due to authentic reporting of experience "inevitably show[ing] aspects of themselves and their personal reactions to others and events that are not ordinarily revealed in everyday behavior" (p. 59). Jourard asserted that learning another's experience helps to enrich and broaden one's own, and that this kind of self-disclosure can serve as "a role model of both the courage to experience without dimming or repressing this or that facet of self and the courage to share this experiencing with others" (p. 62). He also noted that the ability to write allows opportunity for revision and correction which can distinguish useful self-disclosure from "irresponsible self-expressiveness" (Jourard, 1971, p. 63).

I discussed the implications of including or excluding certain kinds of self-disclosure with my supervisor throughout the writing process, in order to carefully tread this line. I anticipated making decisions about what I included about myself in the final published dissertation.

I aim to be authentic and 'real' with my clients, which is considered an important factor in therapeutic success (Gullo et al., 2012; Yalom 2003); and careful self-disclosure can facilitate a sense of trust and safety (Herman, 1992; Maroda, 2009). I am not an unknowable expert-façade, but still need to walk this line carefully in order for the client to feel the boundaries of the relationship are clear, I am self-contained, competent, and, therefore, safe to entrust with the vulnerability and intimacy of a therapeutic relationship.

My Position and Internal Frame of Reference

I am a cis-gendered, straight Pākehā female who has grown up in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, in the same house until the age of 21 years—a privilege of stability in environment I recognise is afforded to very few. I am from an upper-middle class background. I have the benefit of youth and am able-bodied. I have the privilege of a financial and emotional safety net in my family, as well as a supportive workplace and friend circle. I acknowledge these privileges have influenced both my ability to access EFT, as well as my capacity to fully engage and risk opening up something internally that could catalyse a falling apart; not everyone has this space and fortune to experiment with self-discovery.

This information on my background provides some frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990) in relation to my heuristic research, which involved me experientially investigating a format of therapy that is inseparable from the context of nature, animal consciousness, whenua (land), and

relationships between them. As a Pākehā woman, descending and benefitting from the impacts of colonialism, I acknowledge my relationship, understanding, and connection to kaitiakitanga and the land will be different to that of tangata whenua. A spiritually significant connection to land is less commonly considered in the western psychotherapeutic paradigms (Shepherd & Woodard, 2012) which has largely been my frame of reference for learning. Despite this understanding, I have a personal interest in exploring, with congruence and cognisance of my colonial identity, how the environment and frame of therapy could have beneficial therapeutic impact for both myself and others as clients.

Chapter 3: Findings

Three main themes of reflection and meaning were revealed from my experience of EFT: embodiment, attachment, and grief and letting go. In this chapter I reflect on my feelings, thoughts, and connections during my EFT experience as the findings of this research.

Embodiment

I already felt being with horses in a farm environment allowed me to experience the passing of time differently to everyday life. Hours pass by as if operating in a different, less linear universe; it seems simultaneously shorter than expected but also stretches long and luxurious. A stillness, in-the-moment flow state (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) in nature, methodically completing necessary horsemanship tasks with no particular urgency, just 'being.' Not cognisant of the daily operational mechanics or whatever else was going on in my life outside the farm at this particular point in time.

The differing experience of time was drawn into sharper focus in the first EFT session. Mindful practise has historically been difficult for me. Five minutes of practise feels like 20; or I become distracted and it takes me 40 minutes to notice and remember that I was supposed to be being mindful, by which point I get so frustrated with myself I give up. With horses, I found there was always more to notice sensory-wise. EFT sessions were structured through 20 minutes of check in, grounding, and setting intentions with the practitioner over zoom. Then 20 minutes being with the horses, if conditions allowed, the practitioner watching my interactions via iPad. Finally, returning to debrief the experience, check in, and close. When I checked the time expecting it to be quarter of the way through the herd experience, I was surprised that 20 minutes had felt like five. It was easier to pay attention and be mindful of a horse rather than myself: the contour of muscles both similar and different to my own, the smell and texture of the fur and grass, the rhythmic constant munching noises. This led me to challenge with more clarity the self-concept of being uniquely un-helpable, 'mindfulness just doesn't work for me,' and confronting the pride that would impede a solution 'too easy' for the obvious complexity of me, to be able to help me feel better in my body.

Sometimes the horses mirrored my current embodied state, especially when I was not listening or attuning and responding to that state; and sometimes they provided a contrast or salve. One session I was particularly on edge and went in with the intention of relaxation and soothing only to find that all the horses, bar one, was lying flat out on their sides, asleep. How strange but synchronistic that horses were able to model exactly what I needed, despite this

behaviour being highly unusual to see and experience. Horses are prey animals, and typically vigilant and standing. It left me with the offering 'now *that* is relaxation! If they can do it, so can I.'

One powerful teaching moment of embodiment was when working with a more unfamiliar horse, as all the others were laying asleep. The activity was to methodically hand groom around the horse, with the mindful intention of 'simple and slow' identified as needed at that time in my life. I was struggling with anxiety manifesting as psycho-somatic nausea, an intolerable physical feeling I was keen to understand and shift. However, I could not notice much between the horse and I: static, numbness, nothingness, blocked – only physical heat. My mind wandered, struggling to hold the intention. The horse moved away from me, I did not follow, just meandered, observing. The horse returned to the spot, so I attempted to resume the activity, but the horse soon put her ears back, an even clearer sign to back off. I debriefed with the practitioner, and another offering was suggested—was I able to feel the lack of toleration from the horse in my body before she moved away and pinned her ears? What would it be like to approach again but really tune up sensitivity to the field when it feels right to stop? I slowly approached straight on, with the horse watching me calmly and carefully. I moved slightly to the side, remembering horses' blind spot straight ahead. The horse was suddenly alert, startled, reacting to my movement. I took this as notice to stop, about 10 feet away. To my surprise, after a few seconds, she approached me, asking for gentle face scratches.

This reflected a growth point of resisting pushing through, trying to make what 'should' happen eventuate. Rather than drilling down into the 'why' of both the horse's and my own experience or trying to figure out if something was either bodily wisdom or baseless anxiety in the context of general mistrust of myself, I instead allowed and radically accepted what was. A parallel of the push-pull internal process was demonstrated between the horse and I; when I give space, there is less pressure and, therefore, the channel expands—like a hose being squeezed (water spraying explosively and intermittently) and released (smooth flow). Giving space to be allows my undulating bodily experience, and the horse's communication of their bodily experience, to feel listened to. Like with the horse, intrapsychic contact is allowed and sought out, the communication channel becomes clearer, purer, easier to feel and apprehend. Like with the horse, perhaps I had ignored more subtle bodily signals of anxiety or intolerance, and my body had to resort to the extreme of nausea (or in the horse, pinned ears) in order for me to listen.

Attachment

Going into EFT, I expected horses in the herd would just eat grass and largely ignore me every session. I normally interact with horses with purpose, taking them from the paddock to ride or be tended to. I had a pre-conscious belief that horses just tolerate the script, doing as they are told when a human is present through conditioning, not necessarily of free will. In initial EFT sessions I worried about infringing on their agency and peace; they may feel they were not allowed to move away from me, as usually they would be caught and evading capture is deemed a 'bad' behaviour. This worry highlighted the importance of working with horses only on the ground rather than riding. Groundwork feels more equal and organic, horses can respond freely rather than as a result of training, and allows instinctive responses which feel more honest and, therefore, evocative. Sometimes the horse would do a deep outbreath sigh and chewing motion as I left. This is a typical way for a horse to relieve tension or process when returning to a parasympathetic rest and restore state (McDonnell, 2016), and I wondered if my presence was the cause for tension.

At the time when I engaged in EFT, I had a lingering sense that my 'attachment dynamics were going haywire.' I was in a new relationship where I was not valued as a 'therapist'; yet, I had a sense of waiting for the other shoe to drop, and dread it would not, could not last. Hence, the constant and evolving body-based anxiety.

One session I went in feeling on edge, disconnected from my body, sick, and numb. It is important to have body awareness when interacting with powerful and sensitive animals, so it was suggested that rather than approach, I just go in and stand, trying to connect with my body and see what happens. Despite this intention, horses are prone to having their own ideas. A horse I knew well (Sam) immediately marched up to me as soon as I entered the paddock. Leaning his face into my chest, he moved closer still, putting his head over to rest on my shoulder, the way horses sometimes do to each other—a mutual 'you scratch my back I'll scratch yours' dynamic. This had a firm but deliberate way of providing a contrasting salve, cutting through my sense of fragility and hesitation, as if to say 'look, forget about all of that, you are good enough as you are for me to want to interact with.' He would wander away to drink, then return to me, close.

This was a welcome and touching surprise—that Sam would freely choose to spend time with me when I was offering nothing but presence and affection. My impression until this point was Sam felt, at best, neutral about me, the same towards any human. It gave me a sense of Sam appreciating me for myself, not just a means to an end of what I can provide. Sam liked me even though I 'take' from them through riding and being directive. Sam clearly asked for the needs of

scratches and attention to be met, and it was a joy to provide it. It was gratifying that he trusted our relationship enough that I could receive and respond to his asking. I drew parallels to my external attachment relationships from these interactions. I previously struggled to integrate the belief that people would not just tolerate, but actively want to be with, me if I was not providing therapist-like attunement and relating; let alone if I was needy, anxious, frazzled, and not at my best! The horse also demonstrated that asking for needs is not experienced by the other solely as a burden requiring reciprocation but, like me to the horse, someone else could feel that meeting my needs as a joy in itself.

I often oriented myself around responding to the horses' needs rather than focusing on my own. I noticed there was difficulty in session and in life, even identifying my needs in order to value or advocate for them, and how uncomfortable it is to value my needs equally. For me, there was an unconscious greater risk in asking for needs to be met, only to then suffer pain of not receiving or being understood; so safer to neither need nor ask. What I needed back then was what the horses were able to offer in session; someone to attune, understand my needs, and reflect my emotional state in a way that was calming and soothing. Taking this learning forward into what I needed now, I thought to approach the somatic nausea and anxiety, origin and meaning still consciously inaccessible to me, with the same calm attunement: pay attention, honour its existence, desire to understand but not as a fraught, pressured means to the end of making it disappear. The nausea was trying to communicate something, the way a horse or a frustrated and upset toddler might. The part that threw incomprehensible tantrums at age 6 years due to unmet attachment needs was felt to resurface, making itself known through bodily experience despite not really knowing how to communicate or what the needs were. Now I was trying to listen, healing that attachment within myself.

Grief and Letting Go

The themes of attachment, embodiment, grief and letting go are inextricably intertwined in my experience. These themes showed up occasionally throughout my EFT sessions, but none so powerfully as my third to last session, which involved all three themes but especially grief and letting go. For me, the concept of grief cannot exist without also letting go; of what was, of what was not, of a future with the mourned attachment, concept, or object. Therefore, I have intentionally paired 'grief' and 'letting go' as a single theme.

This session I was not sure what I needed but set intention to work on the whole piece of letting go and what it feels like rather than cognitive analysis. I approached Sam, and after several

failed attempts at shooing the other two horses away, I moved to Sam's other side, asking him to guard space for me by deferring to the superior and established communication within the herd, as my present state rendered my command ineffective. Sam occupies the bottom of the herd pecking order and is usually pushed around by others. However, today it was as if he attached to the power of higher purpose in facilitation of my process which was respected by the others. The concept 'letting go' echoed in my mind without impact or feeling, glancing over the surface, the way repeating a word can cause it to seemingly lose meaning. I spent time hand-grooming, then leaned my forehead against the horse's neck with a deep sigh, resting, feeling. I checked the time and was late to return to the debrief. I abruptly turned away from the horse and left, walking up the hill of the paddock towards the gate. While walking I felt a lump in my throat and my eyes prick with and then leak tears, but it felt quite unconnected to anything. 'Where did *that* come from?' I did not *feel* emotional nor could I identify what charged thought or feeling might have triggered this response. In the past I would actively pack away this urge, it was never 'a good time' to cry. I have cried only a handful of times in the last 10 years, including in therapy; it generally ruins my day and is not experienced as cathartic. However, as part of my recovery, I was trying to lean into allowing emotions and grief work, regardless of how or when they appeared. I maintained curiosity and attempted to hold onto this feeling, despite the urge threatening to re-absorb itself into the inaccessible unconscious, as usual.

Returning to the practitioner I informed them 'nothing much happened, I couldn't connect with letting go. But then when I walked away, I started to cry, and I don't know why!' I then burst into tears. Only then, in the therapeutic container, was I able to connect some intrapsychic experience I had barely noticed while with the horse.

Leaning my head into the horse's neck felt, in some way, emotionally risky. I remembered a hesitancy to engage in this intimacy of leaning on, the concept translating from physical to relational. I have historically avoided leaning on others due to the unconscious belief that if or when they leave, I will be left unstable and worse off than if I had never risked it in the first place. Part of me weighed up the risk and felt Sam was stable enough not to walk off, feeling together, quiet, and still in reverie. I was unconsciously experimenting in a low-stakes environment with the experience and potential emotional ramifications of leaning on someone else.

While leaning my head against the horse, I had the passing thought 'oh, I'm leaning my head against someone, kind of like I pressed my forehead against mum's to say goodbye when we had to turn off life support.' At the time of the thought occurring, I barely noticed it; it had no emotional charge and was experienced as an odd, fleeting, and insignificant thought—to the

extent I forgot I even experienced it at all until debriefing with the practitioner. When turning off life support, in a rare moment of bodily intuition, I rested my forehead on hers as if trying to connect telepathically, to communicate everything I had ever wished to, what I felt, and to be present in the most painful, raw, and full sense, knowing I would not get another chance to do so. Letting her know I would be okay, as I knew it was one of her greatest fears to leave her children without a parent.

I wondered if the abrupt leaving of the horse triggered this intrapsychic connection. The departure too sudden, not a soft honouring of transition between spaces. Maybe I felt bad for leaving so suddenly, there was something cold, callous, and apathetic about it. Perhaps this mirrored the way I felt my mum left, without warning or preparation, a shock to the system. Recognising the link between the forehead pressing, end of life, and suddenly leaving, it clicked: 'of *course* I cried,' the connection now so painfully obvious as to be almost humorous. I am continuously reminded and in awe of the ways conscious and unconscious forces work together, protecting from awareness until it is safe to let it be known, and trusted to be received.

Attaching at all risks the possibility of loss; losing not only the present enjoyment, meaning, and fulfilment of that relationship but also the future of it, possibly permanently, possibly irreplaceably. What if any future attachments would be inferior? This experience mirrored my initial feeling around the loss of my mother; any life I would lead from the point of loss would pale in comparison to the life I could have had. Therefore, I had immense difficulty *choosing* to let go. It felt impossible to let go of something wanted, when my most significant attachment had been taken away without consent or preparation. I had not had to decide and act to let go of something wanted before, it just happened to me from within (suddenly *not* wanting a continuation of a relationship, that appears without conscious control or agency) or by external forces (mother dying, being broken up with). Even if I could intellectually recognise I should let something go, while I still emotionally wanted it to continue, I would tolerate almost anything until my brain caught up and no longer wanted it.

Through this reflective process I discovered what I actually need to find and connect with, and what is upsetting and hard to let go of, is not others, but myself: the part of myself that desires connection and understanding projected into others. The impossible idea that if others could finally totally understand me and meet my needs, the wound would be healed. Letting go of an attachment relationship is like losing and grieving that part of myself. Reclaiming the projected part is the way forward to healing.

Chapter 4: Summary and Discussion

EFT allowed me to work on embodiment, attachment ,and grief through the unique relational experience with horses that prioritises pre-verbal communication. In this chapter, I first summarise my findings in the context of my background with the discovered themes. In the discussion I explore how my experience compared to the literature; and examine the theoretical dynamics, mechanics, and processes that contributed to my experiences. I also detail how these understandings can contribute to the discipline of psychotherapy both in validating the existing theory and through the client perspective, demonstrating how the theory integrates into therapeutic experience. Lastly, I explore the significant alteration to the traditional frame online video-calling EFT poses, as well as implications and contributions of this study and EFT to the context of society and discipline of psychotherapy.

Summary

The tying together of past and present make up the summary of my experience of EFT. Many of my background intra-psychic dynamics became clearer directly as a result of the EFT sessions. I did not conceptualise of my dynamics in this way prior to my experience of EFT and the heuristic process of self-inquiry. What was pre-consciously known in some tacit, unformed way prior, became sharper and more whole in the process of creative synthesis.

My Background With Embodiment

For as long as I can remember, I have felt my body and mind are two separate entities and that communication between them was cut off or non-existent. I had the unconscious belief that I could disregard my body as inconsequential, just the shell my 'self' or consciousness inhabited. This possibly originated through some experiences in childhood. Being the stoic, calm, un-needy child, holding myself together, but at arm's length from the family unit to protect myself from others' anxiety. A resulting discomfort with physical affection, and the associated pain with being unable to demonstrate love authentically and congruently, the way parents were able to receive. Having explosive tantrums at age 6 years, but being shut down and given 'time out' (aligning with the parenting methods of the time); nobody understood why I was suddenly acting out, including myself, only that I was upset and felt some painful sense of injustice. Tantrums proved ineffective in meeting unknown and diffuse needs, so they were packed away and I resigned myself to emotional self-reliance. This dissociation from body may also be partially due to the effects of both

lived experience and intergenerationally inherited bodily abuse that necessitated a body-mind split in order to survive when support to integrate trauma was limited or unavailable (Stolorow, 2015).

In the past I have tended to notice a signal only when it becomes debilitating, such as pain from headaches or hunger. I knew from my years of experience that horses are highly sensitive to bodily signals as their primary mode of communication, so I had an idea that EFT could be beneficial in grounding me in my own experience if I was able to be open and receptive to a different way of being. I have tended towards thinking instead of feeling, and EFT would be a foray into a field where feeling and response into the body, without analysis, is key.

As such, a recurring and key intention going into the EFT sessions was a desire for increased embodiment: a sense of connection to myself, grounding in the moment, and knowledge of what my body is communicating so I can respond and look after myself accordingly, honouring a significant part of my experience that has been neglected for much of my life. The wisdom my body offers now acts in extremes, due to not trusting its voice will be heard; either quiet, unclear, hiding, and easily dismissed as fabrication, or intense and debilitating, an explosion. In this way, the relationship between mind and body is defensive and similar to disorganised attachment (Bowlby, 1980). I am the only one who can listen and soothe, but I have also been neglectful and punishing—both the source of safety and danger. Healing the relationship and trust between body and mind will take time.

My Background with Attachment

The journey of understanding my attachment in relationships has also been a key theme of therapy and self-exploration before EFT. I was described as a well-behaved, easy-going, and quiet child. However, when a more expressive/demanding sibling came along, through no fault of my parents who were doing their best with the tools and capacity they had, I developed a sense of self-reliance and independence, not quite trusting that my more understated way of expressing needs or love would be seen or met. I felt like there was an unfortunate, blameless, but accepted mismatch of temperament and way of being within my family. I learned to be most comfortable and safe right on this line between inclusion and exclusion; liking people around but not allowing myself to truly need or lean on others. A pattern that repeats throughout my life to this day.

In my school years I craved closer emotional connection and understanding, a closeness bordering on merger. I oscillated between too-close-for comfort or feeling bored, apathetic, unconnected to those around me. Within the too-close-for comfort relationships, I would

unconsciously solicit people to use me as a digester of emotions, the way a caregiver or primary attachment object might. This served as a way to secure closeness and co-dependence, minimising abandonment fears for myself. From this way of relating grew a self-concept that my only value as a person was what I could provide for others, and how I could centre my being around meeting their needs—in some way giving others what I wished to receive myself. As an adult, for the most part, I outgrew this dynamic with my few close friends and family; however, it intensified in romantic attachments.

My Background With Grief and Letting Go

During the time I was engaging in EFT, I experienced a drastic episode of mental health difficulty and symptoms that were entirely novel to me, and utterly terrifying. I had a visceral sense of being totally unsafe in my own body, foreign and at odds with this new physical and mental reality. A combination of medication withdrawals, attachment anxiety, living alone with privacy, an absence of being relied on, not studying, a workplace and therapeutic space supportive and understanding of mental well-being all culminated in a perfect storm, allowing and prompting what I can only describe as a massive release of stored, unprocessed grief and anxiety my body had been holding for more or less 11-years.

Finishing high school, I was unknowingly depressed and in a deteriorating abusive relationship, acting as an emotional caretaker. My mother and centre of the family died unexpectedly 2 weeks before I turned before I turned 21, wherein I unconsciously took up my perceived role as holding myself and the family together. From there, I was in two subsequent emotionally draining and caretaking relationships while attempting to maintain enough stability to complete undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. 2022 was the first time the necessity of holding myself together by tempering my emotions eased.

Letting go became symbolic for relaxing the vice-like grip I had on myself, not able to feel deeply my own sense of anxiety and loss due to needing to be there for others. Letting go risked falling apart; and, until now, was a luxury I could neither afford nor have confidence I could bring myself back from. The present stimulus, considering letting go of a wanted but ultimately mismatched relationship, meant risking losing yet another attachment I wished to keep and develop. The unprocessed past leaking into the present, letting go and allowing the grief over losing my mother, and the potential to heal our mismatched relationship, meant risking a tsunami of emotion. The very attachment I was grieving being the only person I could imagine leaning on, trusting to help me through it.

Discussion

Neurobiological Processes

In EFT, the field of communication on the non-verbal plane opens up; there is a shift to body focus and movement which serves to quiet overly cognitive and analytic thinking processes (Bentley, 2018). When unprocessed feeling states arise, this focus allows painful energy that is stored in the body to be recognised and released, re-building or creating new neural pathways for healing through experience. Due to humans' evolutionary over-reliance on language, primal ways of connecting have been underutilised and thus underdeveloped. This leaves us disconnected from both other humans and life forces and universal connection shared with other species (Karol, 2007). When energy is needed to maintain a dissociated state due to trauma, this stifles the capacity to process and can lead to an "'absence of an internalised regulating self-object" (Bentley, 2018, p. 46). Talking without bodily processing, therefore, could simply reinforce neural networks, patterns of being, and self-concepts that no longer serve well-being, rendering talk-therapy less efficacious or into 'analysis paralysis' (Maldonado, 1984).

Horses can provide almost immediate bio-feedback, facilitating restorative experiences with ancient right-brain processes concerning the limbic system (Hamilton, 2011), and allowing a larger-than-self connectedness (Karol, 2007). Amplifying this sensitivity to the primal intimate space through pre-verbal experiences helped me to tap into and develop my intuitive and instinctive capacities. This ability, in turn, shifted my internal working models around having needs, expressing and feeling grief, and becoming in tune with my body—all working to increase a secure sense of self (Bachi, 2013). The unconscious and animal brain processes have both been theorised to drive a majority of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Perhaps working directly within this primal space gives us quicker access and workability with the unconscious; for instance, the tactile sensory experience of leaning my head against a creature prompting processing of grief in a way that could not normally happen in a traditional talk-therapy setting. An ancient part responds despite the training of the prefrontal cortex.

Psychodynamic Processes

When the horse is free to move as they please in the paddock, if a projection (McWilliams, 2011) is disliked, the horse will not engage or otherwise gives signs to back off. Conversely, when I was able to feel my emotions congruently, the horses engaged and often provided a healing space and interaction. Horses provided a parallel experience and mirroring (Hayes, 2015; Schore, 2012)

of external dilemmas both through relational microcosms and some truly unique or unusual behaviour or events. Being inherently without ulterior motive meant that horses were adept at highlighting internal discrepancies in a way that felt softer and less relationally challenging or confrontational (Parent, 2016). For example, when I entered the herd intending to listen to my body but instead pushed through despite signs of the horses' intolerance, this highlighted my incongruence. When I was able to back off and tune in, I experienced a shift and positive feedback and learning.

In EFT horses seem to provide a form of unconditional positive regard. Rogers (1961) described this as an acceptance of who the person is; unconditional in that acceptance is not revoked if the person makes a mistake. It allowed me to experiment with different ways of being and expression without worrying about judgement, and identify my less conscious and complex experiences of embodiment, attachment, and grief, resulting in increased inner coherence and less alienation from others (Tudor, 2011). Practitioners have reported that EFT clients felt safer quicker in EFT than traditional talk-therapy spaces (Tipton, 2014), and this was congruent with my experience. The fact that I was able to venture an emotional experiment leading to crying within 10 sessions, where I had only cried minorly a handful of times in 5-years of talk-therapy prior, is testament to the potency of safety non-human relating can allow in experimenting with previously heavily defended parts in human-to-human relating.

Alterations to the Frame

EFT is a significant alteration of the traditional therapeutic frame, and again further altered via online video-calling. The therapeutic frame involves both physical and internal features in a contract understood by both client and practitioner: time, place, duration, and frequency of sessions, cost, the physical setting, and therapeutic attitude of unobtrusive, neutral, anonymous, and professional, varying depending on the theoretical leanings of the practitioner. This is intended to provide a solid predictable foundational structure and, therefore, safety and containment for optimal therapeutic work to unfold (Lemma, 2015).

Conducting therapy outdoors impacts the traditional frame in important ways. Hallberg (2018) noted the difficulty of maintaining acoustical and visual privacy during treatment in the farm environment. Potential confidentiality breaches in the form of being overheard, interruptions, or recognising someone in the outdoor setting, and how to handle such occurrences must be negotiated beforehand. If the client is very loud, or has a particular state of mind that needs the tight containment of a room, indoors may be better suited (Rust, 2020); conversely, for

some, the enclosed space of a room may be triggering or re-traumatising. Having at least one other being in EFT is a change to the traditional dyad, and in a way the horse(s) occupies the in-between space and becomes the relational 'third' rather than the third being between practitioner and client. Rust (2020) described the potential therapeutic benefits of breaking with the traditional frame in favour of working with the less static or controllable natural environment:

> The more-than human world [provides a] non-judgmental space in which the voice of the inner critic can be softened for a while; the wonder, awe, and beauty of the forest, mountains, or sea can offer a portal to an experience of deep mystery and timelessness; cold, rain, or the shadows of the forest can offer a gateway into exploring fears and anxieties; a sense of Nature as origin – both in this life as well as in the life of our species; relationship between place and childhood memories; explorations of adventure and risk; the creativity of the more-than-human world offers a space for relaxation, play, and free association stirring the imagination. (p. 35)

Online video-calling therapy also includes significant alterations to the traditional frame. Failures of technology cannot be controlled; audio, visual, and internet connectivity issues can cause frustration as well activate feelings of powerlessness, and could make it difficult to distinguish between intentional silence or simply internet connection dropping, creating a 'forced-to-speak' dynamic to confirm a maintained emotional connection (Dettbarn, 2013). Both parties may feel that the internet connection is directly correlated with how much therapeutic work can be achieved in the session (Neumann, 2013). These technology failings and interruptions also have potential risk in drawing client and practitioner together in symbiosis against the 'uncanny third' (Dettbarn, 2013). It is easier to miss subtle but important non-verbal communications through a screen; and for clients that struggle with tolerating intimacy and sustaining object relationships, this can become a barrier to progress (Martin, 2013). Clients may also alter the frame by physically moving locations or changing the precedence of confidentiality in ways that restrain the freedom to talk (i.e., another person in the room out of shot), without the practitioner being aware as they would in a shared room. Therefore, confidentiality may need to be constantly re-negotiated. Curtis (2007) argued that online video-calling therapy is necessarily conducted in an 'autistic space,' where when two minds are not in the same geographical environment, containment, and thus the analytic process, cannot occur.

Sand (2007) countered this argument, stating that through development of a 'consensual hallucination' practitioner and client can conduct therapy as if they were in the same time and space. This environment sets the scene for a more flexible playground of unconscious material;

cyberspace has been described as a “transitional space and is easily adaptable as a play space for identity exploration and development that is free from social sanctions” (Neumann, 2013, p. 177).

There is increased mutuality in navigating online space and both practitioner and client are equally vulnerable to technology failures. The negotiation of the online video-calling frame around what happens in the event of different kinds of technological or frame disturbance issues is also naturally more-co-constructed and maintained rather than practitioner directed, as many issues need mutual agreement and thorough discussion (Martin, 2013). In a blind study, audiences were not able to distinguish between online video-calling or in-person therapy sessions. Online video-calling therapy has an impact on the frame and how the therapy unfolds including defenses used, transference, and the way unconscious material is experienced and received; therefore, a firm but flexible frame is essential (Neumann, 2013).

Contribution of EFT Research to the Psychotherapy Discipline in Aotearoa New Zealand

In terms of contribution to the field of psychotherapy, within the field of knowledge of EFT there is clearly a gap in the literature relating to direct client experience. As summarised in Chapter 1, given that the literature on the field is sparse, as it is a relatively recent modality, and that EFT is experientially based, the client voice and actual experience become even more crucial for the foundations of exploration and assessment of the suitability of EFT and practise in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In Chapter 1 I summarised the need for alterative models of psychotherapy treatment that are effective and suitable for a wider demographic range than traditional office-based talk-therapy. Alternative models, such as EFT, must have a sound theoretical and evidence-based backing and efficacy to ensure successful implementation and to secure funding. As summarised in Chapter 2, the challenges posed by conscious academic explication of an inherently feeling, being, less cognitive experience, such as EFT, and the personal challenges inherent in heuristic inquiry, makes this a rather rare but potentially valuable addition to the literature and psychotherapy discipline.

Reducing barriers and increasing accessibility to therapy, especially for clients who are unable to utilise the talking approach due to trauma, would be of benefit to the currently overloaded and undersupplied Accident Claims Corporation sensitive claims system, a system from where many psychotherapists may draw clients. Office-based therapy can be viewed as claustrophobic and intrusive, accessible and suited mainly to the white middle-upper class with expendable incomes. EFT seems more inclusive to different identities, socioeconomic status, and

diagnoses (Tipton, 2014); therefore, further research on this newer modality is a potentially valuable contribution to the discipline of psychotherapy practise. Online video-calling EFT provides an opportunity to service the rural populations prevalent in the cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand, who have access to and comfort interacting with animals, need a somatic or experiential approach due to trauma, and are unable to travel to a therapy office environment due to geographical isolation. In the literature review I summarised how the shift to focus on non-verbal communication increases embodiment. The involvement of a horse develops a stronger therapeutic alliance quicker and can allow clients to experience therapeutic authenticity while at a safe distance, which is especially important for trauma survivors. EFT may reduce the duration therapy for trauma survivors, in turn freeing up more space in the system and reducing wait times for clients.

EFT demonstrates, by way of contrast how in everyday life and in the western psychotherapeutic context, there is a privileging of verbal expression, rationality, cognition, and analysis as the status quo. In comparison to the restriction of a two-person dyad, EFT transcends cultural and social norms, tapping into an innately primal, universal, and 'larger-than-self' way of being and inter-connectedness. This may be why EFT as a treatment model seems to have no disadvantages apparent in the literature (Tipton, 2014), and is effective and applicable to a wider range of demographics than traditional talk-therapy.

The inter-connectedness to something larger than the self, a "consensual, communal, nature-based selfhood" (Fay, 2016, p. 56) aligns more with Indigenous and collectivist ways of being (Fay, 2016; Poutu Morice et al., 2020). This philosophy may also provide a salve to the disconnection, polarisation, and breakdown in relating observed in the current western social climate (Altman et al., 2004); in this way, it may be another case of 'if you get it right for Māori you get it right for everyone' (Gassin, 2019; Oranga Tangata, 2019). Animals have also historically been misused and abused due to over-privileging human ways of being and communication. Perhaps is it time we embrace humility in our human condition and learn to value the wisdom animals are still gracious enough to offer.

EFT's connection to nature also has appeal to urban populations; even in the middle of Auckland one is never too far away from nature and there is a sense of nurturing, stimulation, and fun offered from being outdoors. The New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' Code of Ethics (2018) upholds a principle of harmonious and considerate interdependence with all living creatures and the natural world. Māori conceptualisations of attachment include that of to the whenua (land) and non-human others (Fleming, 2018). To neglect attention to this relationship

could constitute an ethical failure, especially for tangata whenua. To date, there is a lack of bi-cultural consideration and understanding in EFT literature, and what exists largely presents a western worldview. My subjective experience cannot speak to cultural perspectives other than my own. This may be an argument to include perspectives of others in the present research, as it could provide greater contribution or relevance to society and the field. However, this is difficult to do within heuristic inquiry, as Ozetergrul (2017) pointed out: “How do researchers engaged in Hueristic Self-Search Inquiry preserve self-understanding (the apparent prospect of self-search) while investing sustained attention on others’ experiences?” (p. 245). Further research and integration of bi-cultural understandings and safety within EFT would add further insight to the viability and efficacy of EFT in Aotearoa New Zealand.

EFT raises the question: what do we do with the relational field when it opens up? Being present in the moment and reverie with another, are we open enough to receive and be teachable without verbal meaning-making or cognitive processing? How can we be present to ourselves within this medley of connecting experiences, between horses’ differing personalities, relationships with each other, and relationships with us? In EFT, the pressure to impose structure or meet expectations is resisted; instead, the focus is on letting something unfold organically. EFT allows us to remove assumption, the confines of direction, and intention to ‘do’ or achieve from the therapeutic engagement. These offerings from EFT can be translated into clinical work in a more traditional talk-therapy engagement.

I feel changed and moved by the process of undertaking EFT and conducting this heuristic research. I hope that my direct client voice adds a new perspective to the body of literature examining the emerging field of EFT practise in Aotearoa New Zealand.

References

Altman, N., Benjamin, J., Jacobs, T., Wachtel, P., & Geffner, A. H. (2004). Is politics the last taboo in psychoanalysis? *Psychoanalytic Perspectives, 2*(1), 5-37. https://doi.org/10.1080/1551806X.2004.10472893

Bachi, K. (2013). Application of attachment theory to equine-facilitated psychotherapy. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 43*, 187-196. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10879-013-9232-1

Bentley, A. (2018). *Equine facilitated psychotherapy: From a neuropsychoanalytic perspective, how can the horse-human bond assist the repair of early relational trauma that has lead to insecure attachment? A hermeneutic literature review* [Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology]. https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11615

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss. Vol. 3 Loss, sadness and depression*. Basic Books. https://abebe.zohosites.com/files/John-Bowlby-Loss-Sadness-And-Depression-Attachment-and-Loss-1982.pdf

Buber, M.(1958). *I and thou*. Scribners.

Buber, M.(1961). *Tales of the Hasidim: The early masters* (O. Marx, Trans.). Schocken.

Buber, M.(1965). *The knowledge of man*. Harper & Row.

Carlsson, C., Nilsson Ranta, D., & Traeen, B. (2014). Equine assisted social work as a mean for authentic relations between clients and staff. *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin*, *2*(1), 19-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1079/hai.2014.0004

Carlsson, C. (2016). A narrative review of qualitative and quantitative research in equine-assisted social work or therapy – Addressing gaps and contradictory results. *Animalia An Anthrozoology Journal*, February 14. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:liu:diva-168635

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Gronhaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative marketing research*. SAGE.

Curtis, A. E. (2007). The claustrum: Sequestration of cyberspace. *The Psychoanalytic Review, 94*(1), 99-139. https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.2007.94.1.99

Darling, K. M. (2014). *The experience of equine assisted personal growth*. [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan School of Professional Psychology]. Retrieved from: https://www.proquest.com/docview/1526484606?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true

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*(4), 319-336. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-011-9140-z

Douglass, B. G., & Moustakas, C. (1985). Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 25*(3), 39-55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167885253004

Dettbarn, I. (2018). Skype as the uncanny third. In J. Savege Scharff (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis online. Mental health, teletherapy, and training* (pp. 15-25). Routledge.

Donaghy, G. (2006). Equine assisted therapy. *Mental Health Nursing, 26*, 4.

Dorotik, C. (2011). A short history of equine therapy. *Psych Central*. http://blogs.psychcentral.com/equine-therapy/2011/01/a-short-history-ofequine-therapy/

Duncan, C. R., Critchley, S., & Marland, J. (2014). Can praxis: A model of equine assisted learning (EAL) for PTSD. *Canadian Military Journal, 14*(2), 64-69. http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol14/no2/PDF/CMJ142Ep64.pdf

Edirisingha, P. (2012). *Research paradigms and approaches: Interpretivism and positivism (ontological and epistemological perspectives).* Prabash Edirisingha. http://prabash78.wordpress.com/2012/03/14/interpretivism-and-positivismontological-and-epistemological-perspective/

Etherington, K. (2004). Heuristic research as a vehicle for personal and professional development. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 4*(2), 48-63. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733140412331383973

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association. (2009). *Fundamentals of EAGALA model. Practice training manual* (6th ed.). Author.

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association. (2010). *What are equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) and equine assisted learning (EAL)*? Author. Retrieved from http://eagala.org/sites/default/files/attachments/EAPvs.EAL_rev2.27.11_FINAL_0.pdf

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 and Youth Care Forum, 36*(1), 59872. https://doi.org/10.1007/s105668006890318x

Fay, J. (2016). Decolonising mental health services one prejudice at a time: Psychological, sociological, ecological, and cultural considerations. *Settler Colonial Studies, 8*(1), 1-13. http://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2016.1199828

Fleming, A. H. (2018). Ngā tāpiritanga. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, 22*(1), 23-36. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2018.03

Frewin, K., & Gardiner, B. (2005). New age or old sage? A review of equine assisted psychotherapy. *The Australian Journal of Counselling Psychology, 6*, 13-17. https://www.equichanics.co.uk/resources/New%20age%20or%20old%20sage%20A%20review%20of%20equine%20assisted%20psychotherapy.pdf

Fuller, S. (1992). Social epistemology and the research agenda of science studies. In J. R. Brown & S. S. Lukes (Eds.), *Science as practice and culture* (pp. 390-428). University of Chicago Press.

Gassin, T. (2019). *Maori mental health: A report commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal for the Wai 2575 Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry*. Ministry of Justice.

Gendlin, E. (1978). *Focusing*. Everest House.

Grennell-Hawke, N., & Tudor, K. (2018). Being Māori and Pākehā: Methodology and method in exploring cultural hybridity. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(7), 1530-1546. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.2934

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). SAGE.

Gullo, S., Lo Coco, G., & Gelso, C. (2012). Early and later predictors of outcome in brief therapy: The role of real relationship. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 68*(6), 614-619. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21860

Hallberg, L. (2018). *The clinical practice of equine-assisted therapy*. Routledge.

Hamilton, A. J. (2011). *Zen mind, zen horse: The science and spirituality of working with horses*. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from www.amazon.com.

Hayes, T. (2015). *Riding home: The power of horses to heal*. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from www.amazon.com.

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books.

Hiles, D. (2001). *Heuristic inquiry and transpersonal research*. Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education, London, United Kingdom. http://psy.dmu.ac.uk/drhiles/HIpaper.html

Hudson, M., Milne, M., Reynolds, P., Russell, K., & Smith, B. (2010). *Te ara tika: Guidelines for Māori research ethics*. Health Research Council of New Zealand. https://www.hrc.govt.nz/resources/te-ara-tika-guidelines-maori-research-ethics-0

Hurley, K. D., Lambert, M. C., Van Ryzin, M., Sullivan, J., & Stevens, A. (2013). Therapeutic alliance between youth and staff in residential group care: Psychometrics of the therapeutic alliance quality scale. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(1), 56-64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.10.009

Ings, W. J. (2014). Narcissus and the muse: Supervisory implications of autobiographical, practice-led PhD design theses. *Qualitative Research, 14*(6), 675-693. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488128

Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. (2019). *Oranga tāngata, oranga whānau: A kaupapa Māori analysis of consultation with Māori for the Government inquiry into mental health and addiction.* Department of Internal Affairs, New Zealand.

Jones, A. (1999). The limits of cross-cultural dialogue: Pedagogy, desire, and absolution in the classroom. *Educational Theory, 49*(3), 299. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1999.00299.x

Jourard, S. (1968). *Disclosing man to himself*. Van Nostrand.

Jourard, S. (1971). *Self-disclosure: An experimental analysis of the transparent self*. Wiley-Interscience.

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. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104507071057

Kirk, J., Schneider, J., & Pierson, F. (Eds.) (2015). *The handbook of humanistic psychology: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Lac, V., Marble, E., & Boie, I. (2013). Equine-assisted psychotherapy as a creative relational approach to treating clients with eating disorders. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 8*(4), 484-493. https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2013.852451

Lee, P. T., Dakin, E., & Mclure, M. (2016). Narrative synthesis of equine-assisted psychotherapy literature: Current knowledge and future research directions. *Health and Social Care in the Community, 24*(3), 225-246. https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12201

Leming, A. H. (2018). Ngā tāpiritanga. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, 22*(1), 23-36. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2018.03

Lemma, A. (2015). *Introduction to the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy*. John Wiley & Sons. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=4038918

Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Algonquin Books.

Louv, R. (2012). *The nature principle: Reconnecting with life in a virtual age*. Algonquin Books.

Maldonado, J. L. (1984). Analyst involvement in the psychoanalytical impasse. *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 65*(Pt 3), 263.

Markowitz, J. C., Milrod, B., Heckman, T. G., Bergman, M., Amsalem, D., Zalman, H., Ballas, T., & Neria, Y. (2020). Psychotherapy at a distance. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 178*(3). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2020.20050557

Maroda, K. J. (2009). *Psychodynamic techniques: Working with emotion in the therapeutic relationship*. Guilford Press.

Martin, A. C. (2018). Legal, clinical, and ethical issues in teletherapy. In J. Savege Scharff (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis online. Mental health, teletherapy, and training* (pp. 75-84). Routledge.

Maslow, A. (1956). Self-actualizing people: A study of psychological health. In C. E. Moustakas (Ed.), *The self* (pp. 160-194). Harper & Brothers.

McCullough, L., Risley-Curtiss, C., & Rorke, J. (2015). Equine facilitated psychotherapy: A pilot study of effect on posttraumatic stress symptoms in maltreated youth. *Journal of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, 14*(2), 158-173. https://doi.org/10.1080/15289168.2015.1021658

McDonnell, S. (2016). The science behind 'licking and chewing' in horses. *Horse Journals.* https://thehorse.com/18825/what-does-licking-and-chewing-in-horses-mean/

McWilliams, N. (2011). *Psychoanalytic diagnosis* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

Mehra, B. (2002). Bias in qualitative research: Voices from an online classroom. *The Qualitative Report, 7*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2002.1986

Meinersmann, K. M., Bradberry, J., & Robertson, F.B. (2008). Equine-facilitated psychotherapy with adult female survivors of abuse. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing, 46*(12), 36-42. https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20081201-08

Mihalache, G. (2019). Heuristic inquiry: Differentiated from descriptive phenomenology and aligned with transpersonal research methods. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 47*(2), 136-157. http://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000125

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. SAGE.

Nakamura, J., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). The concept of flow. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 89-105). Oxford University Press.

Neumann, D. A. (2018). The frame for psychoanalysis in cyberspace. In In J. Savege Scharff (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis online. Mental health, teletherapy, and training* (pp. 171-181). Routledge.

New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists. (2018). *Code of ethics*. Author. https://nzap.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/NZAP-Code-of-Ethics-2018.pdf

Notgrass, C. G., & Pettinelli, J. D. (2014). Equine assisted psychotherapy: The equine assisted growth and learning association's model overview of equine-based modalities. *Journal of Experiential Education, 38*(2), 1628-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825914528472

Ozertugrul, E. (2017). Heuristic self-search inquiry into one experience of obsessive–compulsive disorder. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 57*(3), 215-236. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167815592503

Parent, I. B. (2016). *Fundamentals of equine assisted trauma therapy. With practical examples from working with members of the Armed Forces*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Parish-Plass, N. (2008). Animal-assisted therapy with children suffering from insecure attachment due to abuse and neglect: A method to lower the risk of intergenerational transmission of abuse? *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 13*(1), 7-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104507086338

Pauw, J. (2000). Therapeutic horseback riding studies: Problems experienced by researchers. *Physiotherapy, 86*(10), 523-527. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0031-9406(05)60986-8

Peterson, C. (2010). *Phenomenological narratology understanding of clients experience and perceptions of equine facilitated psychotherapy.* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of the Rockies]. Denver, Colorado.

Polanyi, M. (1964). *Science, faith and society*. University of Chicago Press.

Polanyi, M. (1966). *The tacit dimension*. Doubleday.

Polanyi, M. (1969). *Knowing and being* (M. Grene, Ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Porter-Wenzlaff, L. (2007). Finding their voice: Developing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral congruence in female abuse survivors through equine facilitated therapy. *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science and Healing, 3*(5), 529-534. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2007.07.016

Poutu Morice, M., Mikahere-Hall, A., Woodard, W., Pye, C., Hinehou Fleming, A., Armstrong, V., Poutu Fay, A., & Poutu Fay, Z. (2020). Waka Oranga: Personal reflections. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand, 23*(2), 35-48. https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2019.05

Powell, C. L. (2014). *Client experiences of equine assisted psychotherapy: An interpretative phenomenological analysis*. [Masters dissertation, University of Johannesburg]. https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/esploro/outputs/graduate/Client-experiences-of-equine-assisted-psychotherapy/999961907691

Romanyshyn, R. D. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. Spring Journal Books

Rowan, J., & Reason, P. (1981). *Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research*. Wiley

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Toward a science of the person*. In A. J. Sutich & M. A. Vick (Eds.), R*eadings in humanistic psychology* (pp. 21-50). Macmillan.

Rooney, P. (2005). Researching from the inside, does it compromise validity: A discussion. *Level 3, 3*(1), 4. https://arrow.tudublin.ie/level3/vol3/iss1/4/

Rose, T., & Loewenthal, D. (2006). Heuristic research. In D. Winter & D. Loewenthal (Eds.), *What is psychotherapeutic research?* (pp. 133-143). Routledge.

Rust, M. J. (2020). *Towards an ecopsychology*. Confer Books

Sable, P. (2012). The pet connection: An attachment perspective. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 41*, 93-99. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-012-0405-2

Salk, J. (1983). *Anatomy of reality*. Columbia University Press.

Sand, S. (2007). Future considerations: Interactive identities and the interactive self. *Psychoanalytic Review, 94*(1), 83-97. https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.2007.94.1.83

Schore, A. N. (2002). Advances in neuropsychoanalysis, attachment theory and trauma research: Implications for self psychology. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry, 22*(3), 433-484. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/07351692209348996

Schultz, B. (2005). *The effects of equine-assisted psychotherapy on the psychosocial functioning of at-risk adolescents ages 12-18.* [Unpublished Masters Thesis, Denver Seminary]. Retrieved from http://www.eagala.org/Research/Academic_Papers

Sela-Smith, S. (2002). Heuristic research: A review and critique of Moustakas's method. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 42*(3), 53-88. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167802423004

Selby, A., & Smith-Osborne, A. (2013). A systematic review of effectiveness of complementary and adjunct therapies and interventions involving equines. *Health Psychology, 32*(4), 418-432. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029188

Selhub, E. M., & Logan, A. C. (2012). *Your brain on nature: The science of nature's influence on your health, happiness, and vitality.* John Wiley & Sons.

Shepherd, T., & Woodard, W. (2012). "Not home" is sometimes where we start. *Ata: Journal of Psychotherapy Aotearoa New Zealand*, *16*, 51-71. https://doi.org/10.9791/ajpanz.2012.07

Smith-Osborne, A., & Selby, A. (2010). Implications of the literature on equine-assisted activities for use as a complementary intervention in social work practice with children and adolescents. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *27*(4), 291-307. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/s10560-010-0201-1

Stewart, L. A., Chang, C. Y., & Rice, R. (2013). Emergent theory and model of practice in animal-assisted therapy in counselling. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 8*(4), 329-348. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2013.844657

Stiltner, C. (2013). *Equine-assisted psychotherapy in a residential substance abuse treatment program for male adolescents*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Capella University]. https://www.proquest.com/openview/761e6c34dd551a4b1949d9151c81f038/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Stern, D. B. (1997). *Unformulated experience*. Analytic Press.

Stolorow, R. D. (2015). A phenomenological-contextual, existential, and ethical perspective on emotional trauma. *The Psychoanalytic Review*, *102*, 123-138. https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.2015.102.1.123

Tetreault, A. (2006). *Horses that heal: The effectiveness of equine assisted growth and learning on the behaviour of students diagnosed with emotional disorder*. [Unpublished Masters Thesis, Governors State University]. Retrieved from http://www.eagala.org/Research/AcademicPapers

Tipton, A. (2014). *The perceived benefits of equine assisted therapy: A thematic analysis based on small scale study interviews of equine assisted psychotherapists and counsellors*. [Masters dissertation, Auckland University of Technology]. Retrieved from https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/7988

Tudor, K. (2010). *The fight for health: A heuristic enquiry into psychological well-being* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation] Middlesex University.

Tudor, K. (2011). Understanding empathy. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, *41*(4), 39-57. https://doi.org/10.1177/036215371104100107

Tudor, K. (2022). Supporting critical self-enquiry: Doing heuristic research. In S. Bager-Charleson & A. McBeath (Eds.), *Supporting research in counselling and psychotherapy* (pp. 57-79). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13942-0_4

Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*. Penguin UK.

Wang, G., Ma, R., Qiao, G., Wada, K., Aizawa, Y., & Satoh, T. (2015). The effect of riding as an alternative treatment for children with cerebral palsy: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Integrative Medicine International*, *1*(4), 211-222. https://doi.org/10.1159/000368408

Whalen, C. N., & Case-Smith, J. (2012). Therapeutic effects of horseback riding therapy on gross motor function in children with cerebral palsy: A systematic review. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics*, 32(3), 229-242. https://doi.org/10.3109/01942638.2011.619251

Whitely, R. (2009). Therapeutic benefits of equine assisted psychotherapy for at-risk adolescents. [Doctoral Dissertation, Texas A&M University-Commerce]. Texas.

Yalom, I. (2003). *The gift of therapy: An open letter to a new generation of therapists and their patients* (1st ed.). Harper Perennial.

Appendix A: Information Sheet

Information sheet
Project title: ***What is the client experience of equine-assisted therapy? A heuristic study***
Project Supervisor: ***Keith Tudor***
Researcher: ***Chloe Osborne***
Date: 04/07/2022

The focus of this research is to explore the client experience of Equine-Assisted Therapy through heuristic self-inquiry, to add to the body of literature and research on this modality including exploring potential benefits and limitations. I hope my research can add to the existing literature on this modality from the client perspective.
I will be using heuristic self-search inquiry as the methodology for this research, which is a type of heuristic methodology developed by Sela-Smith (2002). I will be framing the research in terms of Moustakas (1990) phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. Regarding Equine-Assisted Therapy engagement, I will have a pilot session with an Equine-Assisted Therapy practitioner. If both Equine-Assisted Therapy practitioner and myself feel the experience went well and is a good fit, I will continue to have further sessions as and when our schedules allow, not more than once a week, for up to a year duration.
For the scope of this study, I am interested in specifically psychotherapeutic equine-assisted therapy with a humanistic and, specifically person-centred theoretical orientation, as this is the modality within which I understand others and myself, and in the context of which I hope to be practicing in the future.

References
Sela-Smith, S. (2002). Heuristic research: A review and critique of Moustakas's method. J*ournal of Humanistic Psychology, 42*(3), 53-88. Doi:/pdf/10.1177/0022167802423004
Moustakas, C. (1990). Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.