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From Horse Walk to Therapy Talk: Exploring the Effects of Equine Assisted Family Therapy Coursework on Self of the Therapist Development of MFT Student Therapists

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From Horse Walk to Therapy Talk: Exploring the Effects of Equine Assisted Family Therapy
Coursework on Self of the Therapist Development of MFT Student Therapists

by

Tiffany de León

A Dissertation Submitted to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University

2019

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by

Tiffany de León

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Nova Southeastern University
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This dissertation was submitted by Tiffany de León under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my Abuelo, (Papo) Raul de León, who brought our family to this country for a better life to be liberated from oppression. I wish he could still be here today to see me become, “Doctora de León”

Acknowledgments

The completion of this chapter in my life did not go without the selfless efforts of some special people. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has crossed paths with me while on this journey: your presence has deeply enhanced my experiences.

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Abstract

The Introduction and Advanced Equine Assisted Family Therapy (EAFT) courses offered at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) provide graduate Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) student therapists the space to learn about collaborating with horses for therapeutic and educational purposes. However, these courses also offer the potential for a unique dimension to self of the therapist development. Through these courses, student therapists are able to learn theory and application of an innovative experiential model for clients, but also utilize the activities to get to know themselves better as emerging therapists.

The purpose of this study was to explore if and how the learning that occurs within the EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions. More specifically, the study explored how students utilized the experiential process of learning within the courses to further their understanding of the self of the therapist. The conversations that unfolded from reviewing MFT student therapists' video recorded talk therapy sessions at the Brief Therapy Institute's family therapy clinic served as the data. Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) was used to inquire about this process, including specifically how it relates to self of the therapist development.

Keywords: Equine Assisted Family Therapy, Self of the Therapist, Student Therapist, Interpersonal Process Recall

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The therapeutic relationship is known to be one of the most pertinent factors in helping clients achieve the change they desire. Rogers (1952) highlighted this when he stated, “The task of psychotherapy is to help the person achieve, through a special relationship with a therapist, good communication within himself” (p. 129). Keeney (1983) further described that the nature of the therapeutic encounter is largely based on what the therapist brings into the room. Simon (2006) defined the focus on the self of the therapist as “the heart of the matter” (p. 343), yet self of the therapist development has been largely studied and discussed through the context of supervision and/or as the relationship to the therapists’ chosen model. However, through this manuscript I offer a unique new inquiry into this matter with the assistance of animals—specifically horses.

The use of animals in therapeutic settings has been widely researched, almost exclusively in the context of the client’s perspective. However, it is only recently that the use of animals, specifically horses, has come into the context of self of the therapist development. Giraldez Carter’s (2015) study on the effects of equine assisted activities on the personal and professional development of student therapists found that, in regard to the EAFT coursework,

Most of the responses that the students make are based on their personal development, development as a student-therapist and what they introduce of themselves towards relationships and clinical sessions. Most of the conversations have also revolved around their development of the self of the therapist. (p. 29)

Adding animals to the therapeutic process has been described as a means to decrease boundaries between people and encourage curiosity (Pichot & Coulter, 2006, p. 19). It is

my hope that adding and utilizing horses in self of the therapist development for student therapists in training would have this influence. Details about both the Introduction and Advanced Equine Assisted Family Therapy Courses are discussed later on in this chapter. The advanced EAFT course specifically addresses self of the therapist themes stemming from the work of Simon (2006), Timm and Blow (1999), as well as Aponte's (1982) person of the therapist training model. As Aponte (1982) described:

Training clinicians in the use of their selves in therapy on the premise that the goal, regardless of therapeutic model, is to develop greater capacity to personally engage with clients in ways that further therapeutic objectives even as therapists are who they are at the moment of contact with a client. (p. 397)

The EAFT course specifically addresses this by providing students with a hands-on, experiential avenue to explore self of the therapist development through role plays and interaction with the horses, who are masters of being in the moment.

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning

Whether this be for therapeutic purposes in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) or more educational or team building activities in Equine Assisted Learning (EAL), horses provide a unique experience for the humans who interact with them. The application of the EAP and EAL sessions discussed in this study incorporate various activities centered around the horses and participants whether it be the individual, couple, family, or group dynamic. During these activities, the client is faced with a challenge in which they are asked to execute a task and come to a sort of resolve. The therapist then makes observational statements and offers open-ended questions about the process to conceptualize the experience for the client. These experiences often become metaphoric

for participants, and they are able to relate the feeling, task, or even relationship to the horse back to their daily lives. This process then allows the participant an opportunity for difference in perspective or avenue to manifest change. Learning to relate and connect with such a magnificent being as the horse often provides a shift for the participant who is able to physically move with an animal that weights around 1,000 pounds. The tactile experiences and activities that occur at the barn with the horses often leave an impression on the participants—a stimulation almost like muscle memory. It leaves them not only with the powerful memory but also permeates the 5 senses: smell, touch, sound, sight, and even taste at times. Through this involvement with the horses, the process becomes a pragmatic experience for the participants, creating a mind/body connection.

EAP and EAL have been used with diverse populations and utilize the partnership between human and horse. They are not considered to be a model, but a perspective that allows therapists to integrate their own specific therapeutic positions and interventions (Masini, 2010). The field is broad and there are different modalities used to perform equine assisted sessions, which are explored further in Chapter II. However, for this study, I looked specifically at the Equine Assisted Family Therapy (EAFT) modality developed by Dr. Shelley Green at Nova Southeastern University. This model only includes un-mounted work and does not involve physical rehabilitation or horsemanship training; it explores the process that occurs during psychotherapy and professional development.

The distinctive nature of this work relies on the horse's individual features. Frewin and Gardiner (2005) discuss the assets that horses have which make this work unique and powerful. They discuss a horse's ability to give "immediate non-judgmental

feedback” (p. 6). This is due to the fact that, unlike other animals utilized in therapy modalities, horses are prey animals and have to fully be aware of their environment at any given moment as a means of survival, giving them the ability to be in the moment at all times. As Masini (2010) described, horses give pure reactions and do not change in order to appease human feelings, which then allows the participants to have an unfiltered response.

Equine Courses at Nova Southeastern University

The Introduction and Advanced EAFT coursework was created by Dr. Shelley Green, Ph.D., LMFT at Nova Southeastern University (NSU). The focus of the coursework is to teach student therapists in training about a modality to provide therapy to clients along with how and why it works and help them to utilize this frame to assist in their own personal and professional growth. As Dr. Green stated, “The goal and my hope—and I haven’t been wrong yet—is that you are very different on the last day of the class than you are when you first came in” (personal communication during Introduction to EAFT, March 14, 2018). Along with Dr. Shelley Green, a teaching assistant who has completed both EAFT courses is also often present. An Equine Specialist is always at the barn to provide another perspective, offer invaluable feedback from the horse’s standpoint, and keep everyone safe (since they are the experts on horse behavior). The courses consist of a maximum of twelve students each semester and alternate each week between a traditional classroom setting at NSU and experiential sessions with the horses at Stable Place Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides EAP and EAL to the South Florida community and serves as an internship site for NSU family therapy students.

Self of The Therapist

According to Timm and Blow (1999), “Self of the therapist work is the openness of the therapist to take a look inside themselves and work on their own issues in such a way that they can become aware of what they bring into the room” (p. 333). Through this self of the therapist process with the horses, therapists are able to discover attributes for themselves that are isomorphic to their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, in EAFT there are no right or wrong ways to complete the experiential activities with the horses. This mirrors the therapeutic process of self-discovery, which allows therapists to recognize strengths as well as areas for growth. It also serves as a way to be mindful of what they bring into the therapy room and how it can influence a session. In furthering their journey of self-discovery, therapists often find that they do better therapy when they are more authentically themselves within the session. This does not mean that the therapist disregards professionalism, but rather is informed by their worldview; Carl Rogers points out that he does not use all of his personal characteristic within his use of self in therapy and goes onto explain how everyone has different parts which show up in different contexts (Baldwin, 2000).

Self of the therapist exploration is pertinent to the therapeutic process. Lum (2002) stated, “The development of the self of the therapist is a significant aspect of becoming an effective therapist. The use of self has been recognized by various therapists as being the single most important factor in developing a therapeutic relationship” (p. 181). As Hayes (2015) stated;

The success, contentment, and well-being of every human are all directly tied to the quality of their relationships with themselves and others. To have successful

relationships, humans, just like horses, must learn and have modeled for them qualities that will create and establish mutual love, trust, and respect. (p. 93)

Those of us who work with horses in this capacity have a saying out at the barn: “Who you are with the horses mirrors who you are in life.” This assumption stems from the common (but sometimes contested) notion that horses act as a mirror to what humans bring, whether it be an action or emotion (Trotter, 2011), meaning that the horse will pick up on whatever action or emotion the human brings to the barn and the horse will reflect it back to them in a non-threatening way. This serves as raw data for the therapist and then allows room to observe, comment, and question. Few experiences in life can be isomorphic to the therapeutic process. EAFT allows participants the opportunity to receive that raw data previously discussed, about how they navigate the world, resulting in insight for possible change or as a way to highlight strengths—all relating back to how, why and who they are as a therapist. The EAFT coursework taken by students who are therapists in training in Nova Southeastern University’s Marriage and Family Therapy program attempts to tie this experiential form of therapy and learning to the isomorphic process of self of the therapist development. Through this type of experiential learning, therapists are able to gain a new understanding of their worldview and relate differently with the specific model of therapy in which they practice, in turn creating a new understanding of their therapeutic stance. As Simon (2003) reinforces,

When they participate in a therapy that is guided by a model that their therapist chose because of its fit with her worldview, clients encounter not an abstract theoretical edifice, but the personhood of their therapist... And the therapist

herself, when she uses the model, ultimately uses herself. Therapy thus becomes what it always is at its best—an encounter between persons (p. 11).

Furthermore, EAFT is something that transcends across relationships. As Bateson (1972) stated, “No man is ‘resourceful’ or ‘dependent’ or ‘fatalistic’ in a vacuum. His characteristic, whatever it be, is not his but is rather a characteristic of what goes on between him and something (or somebody) else” (p. 303). This quote beautifully articulates the relational approach of this work and training that student therapists in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at NSU receive, along with highlighting the nature of the relationship between student and horse. Nichols and Schwartz (2011) wrote, “It isn’t so much what therapists do that matters, it’s who they are” (p. 148). The characteristics of who the therapists in training are manifests through creating relationships and interactions with the horses. The student therapists are allowed to experience in the purest form of who they are and what they bring to the therapeutic relationship.

Objective

The purpose of this study was: (1) to investigate how the process of EAFT activities affects self of the therapist development of the student therapists in training; (2) to identify in what ways this occurs; and (3) to understand how or if this is translated back to doing a traditional talk therapy session in BTI. Furthermore, the study sought to shed light on how EAFT activities influence student therapists’ development and to contribute to the limited research on equine assisted psychotherapy and equine assisted learning.

I utilized a qualitative research method, Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), to gather the data. IPR allows researchers and participants to listen to their recording and pause to discuss whenever a relevant reflection arises (Chenail, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the noted recordings were the participants' video recorded talk therapy session's, which is discussed later on in this manuscript. This allowed the student therapists to describe their own feelings that they experienced while providing a therapeutic session as well as highlight what skills they used for supporting their clients. (Crews et al., 2005). The study consisted of Marriage and Family Therapy students in training at NSU who had taken the Introduction and Advanced EAFT courses. The participants were chosen through self-selection and utilized talk therapy sessions that had been previously video recorded in the family therapy clinic at the Brief Therapy Institute but must were sessions that occurred after completion of both EAFT courses. I gave the participants a series of questions, which can be found in Chapter III, as it relates to their experience with the horses prior to the participant and myself sitting down to watch the video recording. During the interview, I instructed the participants to stop the video recording at any point they believed to be relevant to the above mentioned questions. Lastly, participants were interviewed, and data was carefully reviewed and transcribed to analyze.

For the purpose of this study, The Brief Therapy Institute (BTI), which is both a community service agency serving individual, couples and families from diverse backgrounds and a training institution for graduate students in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Nova Southeastern University, served as the location for the research. Students take part in practicums throughout their coursework where they have

live supervision from AAMFT Approved Supervisors behind a one-way mirror as they facilitate therapeutic sessions with members of the community. The student therapists also have the opportunity to video record the sessions for purposes of academic and professional use with permission from the clients. It is these video recordings that were utilized for the purpose of this study.

Self of the Researcher

In 2013 I began my graduate studies in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Nova Southeastern University where I obtained my Masters degree and was first introduced to the transformative work of EAFT during the Introduction class. After completing my Masters, I decided to continue my education and enroll in the PhD program also in Marriage and Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University. At this time, an Advanced EAFT course was created and I was eager to enroll to satisfy my desire for experiential modalities and to get out of the traditional classroom setting; also, I have a strong love for animals and wanted to combine the two worlds. I knew I would experience a change in myself and I wanted to push myself to become a different professional and therapist than I was in the Masters program. Through my graduate studies, I began to develop an understanding of change that was influenced by systemic thought and circular, rather than linear, causality. As Bateson (2002) stated, “What is the case is that when causal systems become circular, a change in any part of the circle can be regarded as cause for change at a later time in any variable anywhere in the circle” (p. 56). This highlights my systemic mind and the belief that one small change in the system affects the entire system, that system being my life as a graduate student and emerging professional, while one of the small changes being the EAFT coursework. It also

resonates with the model of therapy that I practice; solution focused brief therapy. As de Shazer stated, “If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it; if it works, do more of it; if it’s not working, do something different; small changes can lead to big changes” (de Shazer & Dolan, 2012, pp. 1-2). This allows me to trust the therapeutic process in such a way that fits organically with my worldview, similar to my experience with EAFT. After I completed my EAFT coursework, I became a Teaching Assistant (TA) for the following three semesters of EAFT courses.

The time came for me to complete my Clinical Portfolio (CP), which essentially consists of a written and presentation component of my clinical skills. The written portion outlines my philosophy of treatment, epistemology and how it aligns with my model of therapy. Additionally, aligning with my worldview and ultimately how I integrate it all into a case conceptualization of an actual client in BTI. The video recordings previously discussed are also used for this purpose and then presented to a panel of professors and peers. As Keeney (1983) stated, “One’s knowing about therapy changes one’s therapy, which subsequently changes one’s knowing about therapy” (p. 23). It was during this process that I grasped what I had discovered in the EAFT coursework and how much it influenced my self of the therapist development.

An example of this was during one of the EAFT class activities that I was a participant in. The theme was facing your fears, and the activity is called “moving hips.” During this activity, participants are asked to write down a fear related to their personal or professional development. The participant then writes this fear onto a post it note and tapes it the hindquarters of the horse, which is the powerhouse of the horse and usually most feared area to interact with. The participant then holds the lead rope with one hand

and points to the fear with the other while walking towards it, creating a spinning movement with the horse. This activity has the potential of offering a different or new experience to changing one's relationship with said fear. This activity allows the participant to literally face their fear as they walk toward it in a metaphorical and physical way, fostering a mind-body connection. Part of the class is to keep a reflection journal, here is an excerpt of my experience that day:

When I taped my fear to the horse's hindquarters, all of the symptomatic reactions rushed into my body as they do when I am faced with the actual fear (which is something I'm currently dealing with during sessions with a client in BTI) that I wrote on my card. I don't know what came over me but it was so amazingly powerful to just go at it (the fear), spinning with the horse and staring down my fear, I forgot where I was for a moment, I was so enfolded. It was one of the most liberating experiences I've had in a long time. I was feeling so many emotions at the time: fear, excitement, power, and freedom I couldn't help but cry at the end. Seeing my other classmates have similar experiences and being vulnerable made me tear up as well. It is just so amazing to be able to have those moments in this class and seeing everyone's relationship with their fears in such a unique way. This experience just made me realize that I do have the confidence to be a great therapist, sometimes my way may be different but it's okay, because we all may have different ways of achieving a goal, but in the end they all lead to the same road. (de León, 2014, p. 4)

At the time that this dissertation began, I was the Doctoral Intern at Stable Place, Inc., conducting EAFT and EAL sessions with clients ranging from Anesthesiology

students and substance misuse groups to individuals, couples and families from diverse backgrounds. It was during these sessions that I realized in my reflective practice from both myself, feedback from colleagues, and even clients how comfortable I became in my own skin as a professional in the field, both in equine sessions at the barn and in traditional talk therapy sessions in BTI.

Significance of the Study

This study's intention was to explore the impact of EAFT coursework on self of the therapist development and assist in introducing EAFT as a tool for student therapists to discover and utilize this process in traditional talk therapy sessions. Green (2013) highlighted the use of horses for training student therapists when she stated, "Using the horses as their clients, therapists explored their typical ways of assessing and developing connections, their ways of managing 'stuckness,' as well as their approach to change" (p. 258). This study aimed to bridge the gap between what happens with the student therapists' self of the therapist development at the barn during EAFT coursework and during their traditional talk therapy sessions.

Organization of the Study

This study encompasses five chapters. Chapter I illustrates the context of the study and outlines Equine Assisted Therapy, the equine course at NSU, the training facility at NSU, self of the therapist, objective, self of the researcher, significance of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter II examines the literature related to this study and explore the deeper context of EAFT and self of the therapist development. Chapter III is comprised of an explanation regarding the methodology used for this study as well as details about the design and procedure. Chapter IV explores the in-depth

analysis of the data and findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter V offers a discussion of implications and summary.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning

Similar to other species in the animal kingdom, horses offer a non-judgmental stance, are free of expectations, and are not in tune to our looks or status (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). However, unlike other animals, horses are prey animals, and their survival relies on being fully present in the moment. This is what makes them powerful collaborators for this work, they are constantly aware of the non-verbal queues that humans send off and then act accordingly for self preservation hence sending a direct, clear message to the human interacting with them (Green, 2013, p. 3)

This allows for clients to experience the mind/body connection that this form of experiential therapy manifests, and the practice of observation becomes key to the therapeutic process for the therapist and for the client. The behavior of the horse becomes central to the process and the focus is on the existential experience in the moment of being with the horse. This allows for a tactile experience that stays with the participant long after the session is over.

Lac (2017), stated,

At the Human-Equine Relational Development (HERD) Institute, we believe that horses offer a relational presence that is often missing from our clients' lives, and it is their individual way of responding to our clients that bring about healing.

They are equal partners in the process and not a tool to be used simply to project our feelings onto. (p. 37)

The horses allow for direct, raw feedback without the need for words, which is often then translated by clients into metaphors for their lives. Trotter (2012) went on to say that “a

lot of people learn to behave differently in their interpersonal relationships from the way we treat horses; it invites participation rather than just being ordered around” (p. 21). In other words, the participant plays an active role in their session as collaborators with the horse. The opportunity is created to solve their own problem with the support and observation of the therapist. Lac (2017) further highlighted this and stated that archeologist K. A. Oma offered the following explanation:

The human-horse relationship is founded on interconnectedness where a joint participation in the world leads to a state of humans and horses being mixed.

Inherently, species that live together come to attune to each other, and a platform of communication based upon sympathetic responses to each other is established.
(p. 8)

While the exact reason equine assisted modalities are so powerful to the healing process of humans is not yet entirely understood, Hallberg (2018) offered some key responses to this age-old question. First, is the movement of the horse, attributed to their unique way of moving which has been studied in terms of its use in physical, occupational, and speech therapy (p. 14). However, the aspect of the psychological advantage has not been addressed and there is still much room for inquiry on both aspects. The ethological characteristics of horses comes next, meaning the specific behaviors horses offer, such as their large size, strength, non-verbal communication, instinct, herd dynamics, and sensitivity to their environment as well as human emotion (p. 16). Thirdly, the role of motivation, which research implies that the use of horses in both physical and psychological therapy can extend a “unique, exciting, and fun treatment intervention” (p. 17). Authenticity is another factor, which comes from the part of the therapist as well as

the horse. As discussed previously, the horse's primal instinct being a prey animal, is always acting and observing its interactions in a way that is framed by its own safety first, hence its non verbal actions cannot lie. Furthermore, the therapist is viewed from a different perspective in that they may dress in more casual clothing than in a traditional setting as well as interact differently, making them appear more approachable and 'real' to the client (p. 18). The farm setting and role of nature is another important aspect, as over the years humans have decreased the amount of time spent in nature and highlighting the importance of being in nature for the overall health (p. 20). The benefits of humans being in nature has been well researched; increasingly, professionals have begun to recognize the unique aspects of the farm atmosphere and the impacts on clients, pointing out the absence of "sterility" (p. 19). Lastly, the human animal bond is significant, and has been widely researched with a variety of animals, dating back to the beginning of time. They have been implemented in diverse settings from hospitals to schools, for therapeutic and companion purposes. Furthermore, the human animal bond is attributed to a wide range of decreases in disease processes and physiological symptoms, as well as an increase in positive social interactions (p. 20). With all the above information in mind, Hallberg (2018) stated that it is "the complexity and dynamic nature of the *whole* that brings about change" (p. 23).

There are numerous kinds of equine assisted therapies offered to clients, and they primarily developed out of three modalities. As Hallberg (2018) stated "Although there may be overlap between the populations or conditions served by the various forms of equine assisted therapy, each type of therapy addresses a different aspect of the problem" (p. 31). For the purpose of this study, I briefly described three founding forms, one of

which is the focus for this dissertation. Hippotherapy, which is possibly the most well known form of equine therapy, involves the client riding the horse for the purpose of rehabilitation and improving physical movement (All et al., 1999). Secondly, therapeutic riding builds on hippotherapy in that it not only focuses on physical but also cognitive rehabilitation while focusing on horsemanship skills. Therapeutic riding has also been correlated with improving mental health by allowing the client to experience a sense of control and build on positive interactions (All et al., 1999, p. 54). Under these first two umbrellas fall the categories of equine assisted physical therapy, equine assisted occupational therapy and fairly recently, equine assisted speech therapy. As Hallberg (2018) described, these approaches support sensory-motor development as the horse requires full body integration through their vigorous movements and unique characteristics (p. 35). Lastly, and the focus of this study, is Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) and Equine Assisted Learning (EAL), which move from physical and cognitive rehabilitation to mental health and personal growth. Hallberg (2018) noted that the terms equine assisted psychotherapy and equine assisted mental health are used interchangeably (p. 36). To distinguish the two, she described EAP as a “specialty area,” where licensed mental health professionals provide controlled mental health services with horses in a farm environment (p. 36). Furthermore, she emphasized that EAL falls under the category of non-therapy services, and focuses on “teaching life skills, social skills, communication skills, or leadership skills while facilitating personal growth and increased self awareness through both mounted and non-mounted interactions with horses” (p. 38). An example of this is found in a study about partnering with horses in

leadership training. Gehrke (2009) found that one of the participants who was the manager of several project teams in a high tech company had the following reaction:

It's one thing to have a horse like you, however it is another thing to have a horse want to follow you around with no lead lines attached. You can't be a leader just by telling someone you are a leader. You have to prove it . . . you have to be it. Before, if I was the leader and you didn't do what I wanted, I would get angry. I may give up on you or just do it myself. Now I have a new perspective on leading others which is more effective and energizing as well. I learned how my energy and presence impacted how others (the horses) perceived me and that became a significant learning experience which has shifted how I manage and lead my team. (p. 224)

This participant went on to say that what he learned from this training translated back to his work:

He had immediately been able to apply his newly discovered realization to his project team and found that the work week went smoother. He added that the work was also more fun and less frustrating. He also indicated that the team became more productive when he was less angry and more present to assist his employees. (p. 224)

The above example is just one of the ways that horses can be a powerful collaborator for change. As discussed in this chapter, there are various methods to join with horses for therapeutic purposes, depending on the goal. However, for the purpose of this study, the work that is discussed is all ground-based, meaning no riding is done, shifting the focus from either a physical therapeutic intervention or linear style of teaching horsemanship

skills to experiential exercises that are profound and metaphoric in nature. This form of experiential intervention has the potential to open avenues for clients and students to experience different opportunities for change and/or growth. As Lac (2017) stated, “Working with horses through groundwork offers clients a powerful insight into their awareness of their own energetic power and intentions and increases their ability to regulate their energy” (p. 40).

Both EAP and EAL are not governed by any specific regulatory entity. However, there are organizations that offer training and certification such as: Eponquest, Adventures in Awareness, The Equine Psychotherapy Institute, The Gestalt Equine Institute of the Rockies, Natural Lifemanship, and The Human-Equine Relational Development (HERD) Institute which all have different requirements (Hallberg, 2018). The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) is one of the largest organizations for training and certification. Everyone who attends their trainings learns of both EAP and EAL, they also require certain prerequisites, and monitor their members closely. However, as noted by Hallberg (2018), they are “not a credentialing body” (p. 72). Sessions performed by EAGALA certified therapists require a licensed mental health professional as well as an equine specialist whose main goal is the safety for all involved and has specific training in horse behavior to be present during every session (EAGALA, 2010). This unique combination allows for the collaboration of the mental health clinician and equine specialist to merge their skills and enhance the therapeutic process for the client, while also attending to the well being of the horse. It is important to note, for the purpose of this study, that the use of both a mental health clinician and equine specialist were implemented. Furthermore, membership associations offer another

avenue for therapists in this field to connect for support and maintain standards for the field (Hallberg, 2018).

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Underpinnings

The use of horses for healing purposes can be dated back to ancient Greek mythology; Hippocrates was the first to note that horseback riding aligned with a “healing rhythm” which in turn led physicians to prescribe it for mental, physical and emotional issues (Grandos & Agís, 2011, p. 191). While EAGALA has specific guidelines for performing EAP and EAL sessions, and the field of equine therapy is broad, Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning specifically, as described by Trotter (2012) have been influenced by four main psychotherapy theories: Brief Therapy, Gestalt Therapy, Reality Therapy and Adlerian Therapy. To give some context into what informs the work, I will define these theories and how they relate to this practice.

Brief Therapy, is the theory that fits best with the EAFT ideas, though I can see the influences of the others as well. Two key components for change are found in this model—being able to focus on visible behavior patterns and implementing intentional interventions to manifest change in such patterns. This shows why it fits well with utilizing the horses, since they reflect back to us what we are showing the world (our patterns) but often have trouble seeing for ourselves which is where that observation piece comes in (leaving room for the therapist to implement an intervention). Trotter (2012) also talks about how brief therapy is action oriented and requires the therapist to be active in creating movement for change to manifest. This theory fits for EAP and EAL sessions, as the work is experiential and as previously discussed, allows for raw interactions and behavior patterns to occur in the moment for the client through

collaboration with the horse during the activities which often becomes metaphoric for the participant's life.

Gestalt Therapy is about being in the present moment. Being in the moment is the unique quality that horses possess as they are constantly aware of their environment because, as previously discussed, being prey animals, they are continually mindful of their own safety before anything else. In turn, this sets the stage for the humans involved to also be in the moment and allows for a shift in the client's perspective.

Reality Therapy focuses on being in moment, the decision making process and belonging. It also calls for the role of the therapist as active in the process to connect with their client. Both of these areas align with EAFT in that the horse creates the "in the moment" pace of the session which allows the client to experience the same phenomenon. Lac (2017) highlighted that "Often, for clients, it is the horse's willingness to stay with them whilst they are struggling with difficult feelings that acts as confirmation of the horse's acceptance of them" (p. 39).

Lastly, Adlerian Therapy is based on the premise that people want to have meaningful connections in relationships and strive for significance. This theory fits well with EAP and EAL because the horse is not trained to do any specific task; therefore, when the clients are asked to carry out an activity, they must first build a connection with this huge, possibly intimidating animal. As Trotter (2012) stated, "not enough can be said about the power individuals feel when they are successful in getting a 1,200-pound horse that could easily overpower them to respond to them" (p. 12). This form of therapy also identifies challenges and methods to resolve them, further aligning with EAP and EAL sessions in that the activities are presented as a challenge needing to be completed. These

activities often do not go as planned and as such, require the client to try something different and spontaneous, which can create a meaningful interaction and new possibility for change to occur.

With the above information in mind, and while each therapist will add their own theoretical and clinical perspectives, the EAFT work specifically is rooted in systemic, non-normative ideas and incorporates theory from various strength based models. As deShazer (1984) explained, a solution focused perspective privileges the clients' worldview and honors their solutions. Combined with the brief and strength based approaches previously discussed, the opportunity for a unique form of collaborating with horses known as Equine Assisted Family Therapy (EAFT) was born. This is the method utilized to train the MFT student therapists who are the participants in this study, which I describe in more detail below.

Equine Assisted Family Therapy

This unique approach to EAP and EAL utilizes a collaboration with both a mental health professional and an equine specialist, similar to the EAGALA approach. This approach maintains a focus on strengths and resources while also avoiding pathologizing ideas (Green, 2019, p. 4). Furthermore, it applies the specific systemic and brief therapy approaches taught in Nova Southeastern University's Marriage and Family Therapy program. EAFT is used both for clinical work with individuals, couples, families, and groups, but also as relational means to train therapists. In either EAP or EAL, the client or student is asked to participate in an activity with the horses. In these distinctive interactions with the horses, students are able to gain a new awareness of nonverbal communication and learn the power of process rather than content in meaningful

interactions and conversations with clients. Lac (2017) further highlighted this when she stated that “the nonverbal behaviors exhibited by horses with the herd are often transferred to humans when they enter into their environment and this offers clients an experiential process of immediate biofeedback on their own life energy and intentions” (p. 39).

During the EAFT courses at NSU, students take part in the above-mentioned activities which focus on a particular theme such as dealing with uncertainty, stepping outside of comfort zones, establishing safety, communication, independence, self-esteem, goal setting, and setting boundaries while the other students observe. As described previously, there are no right or wrong ways to perform these activities, and it is not a task to be completed as much as a process to experience. This leaves a lot of room for opportunity within the session for both the client and the therapist. Mandrell (2014) described experiential therapy as a hands-on activity where one is “experiencing” and in turn, learning from said experience (p. 2). Nichols and Schwartz (2011) described the purpose of experiential work as the process of bringing to light an individual’s inherent strengths (p. 131). After the activity is completed, the students, professor, and equine specialist make comments about their observations. These conversations often offer the participant a different perspective on either themselves or their challenge as well as opening doorway for self-reflection. The interaction with the horses allows the clients or students to have an assortment of experiences within the group setting, usually through observations and interpretation, which in turn creates the opportunity for vulnerable conversations to emerge (Karol, 2007, p. 80).

Along with participating in the previously mentioned activities, students also learn to create and implement a mock EAFT session, with a new empathic understanding of how the session might feel for a client. Apart from the clinical aspect of the work in giving students the opportunity to utilize another modality with clients, equine assisted activities can also be utilized to train therapists and enhance self of the therapist development. As Green (2019) stated, “Attention to the self-of-the-therapist is foundational in our equine coursework, and it is always informed by a systemic, relational perspective” (p. 151). Often times, the activities that take place in the courses not only offer new perspectives and unique understandings, but also manifest conversations around the students’ self of the therapist development. Specifically, as Green (2018) described:

Informed by our commitment to a non-normative, non-pathologizing approach, we invite the students to explore connections between their interactions with the horses and the ways they have experienced, and responded to, similar situations in their personal and professional lives. As past struggles and challenges become relevant, our focus is on the resources students have acquired through meeting those challenges, and on how they may experience something new with the horses that has relevance for responding to challenges in the therapy room (p. 253)

The profound nature of the work that occurs in EAFT offers possibilities that students and participants would not be able to acquire in traditional settings. As Green (2018) described an interaction during one of the EAFT courses, “The horses provide a rich and potentially transformative partnership for exploring and understanding how to bring their ‘best selves’ into the room with clients” (p. 254). A student who participated in the

coursework noted,

Since the horses are attuned and connected to each participant in EAT, they also pick up on what therapists bring into session. This course really highlighted that, by allowing training therapists to be participants, and by allowing them to experience the powerful sessions for themselves. The activities allowed for each clinician to be self-reflective, mindful, and intentional each time they worked with the horses during class. Each course activity made a way for the clinicians to explore their therapeutic orientation, their style of working and their personal values in an experiential way. (Green, 2018, p. 254)

Training Family Therapists

For the purposes of this study, the clinical training that participants received was in Nova Southeastern University's Brief Therapy Institute family therapy clinic. Family Therapy students receive live supervision through a one-way mirror in the clinic from licensed AAMFT Approved Supervisors as well as utilize practicum teams. During this process, clients are given the option to consent to video record their sessions for training, academic, and professional purposes. The conversations that emerge from reviewing the video recorded talk therapy sessions of students who have taken both EAFT courses serve for the data of this study and are further discussed in Chapter III.

Simon (2006) proposed that family therapy training, specifically, be guided by a four-stage progression:

First, trainees would need to be led in an exploration of their personal worldview. Second, they would need to acquire a working knowledge of the major models of family therapy. This knowledge would need to include an

understanding of the view of the human condition that underlies each of the major models, and an understanding of how that view informs and shapes what the model has to say about the way in which therapy should be conducted. Third, trainees would need to be helped to identify the model(s) whose underlying worldview most closely matches their own. Fourth, and finally, trainees would need to be helped to develop nuance and sophistication in the practice of the model(s) that provides the closest fit with their personal view of the human condition. (p. 340)

As the quote described, this is what makes training family therapists different from training in any other field. While there is an abundance of theory, philosophy and technique to be learned, what makes training family therapists unique is that it requires a shift in thinking and personal understanding, the overarching theme being an epistemological shift. Minuchin, Reiter, and Borda (2013) stated that “new therapists tend to think of themselves as the intermediary between a technique and a family, but the therapist is much more integral than that. In the process of therapy, s/he is the central tool” (p. 9). Steele (2006) described that contrasting to most professions, a unique feature of practicing family therapy requires the therapist to learn more than just the tools and techniques, but also, allow for the mixture of various dimensions, including self-awareness.

To understand what marriage and family therapy is, Rambo and Hibel (2013) offered this brief description, “Family therapists do not necessarily see whole families; they may see individuals, couples, or groups. What makes family therapy a distinction is its relational focus” (p. 3). This distinction on relational focus is not only applied by the

therapist to the client's worldview, but also as a way for the therapist to understand their own worldview. How and what a family therapist thinks manifests the type of conversation that will be had with clients and such an awareness on the part of the therapist is crucial to the therapeutic process. As Keeney (1983) highlighted, "Examination of our epistemological assumptions will enable us to more fully understand how a clinician perceives, thinks and acts in the course of therapy" (p. 7). While epistemology is isomorphic to practice, family therapists in training are often encouraged to develop a heightened sense of awareness while conducting sessions with clients. A connection between epistemology, theory and practice is fostered. However, the method for this is often entwined in readings, class discussions, and internal battles. Students are often left with internal conflicts between what they knew, or thought they knew about how they operated in the world and why. Consequently, all of this exacerbates the conflict of trying to figure out who they are now as professionals and tying it in with all the other complex aspects of their lives. Taking this into account, the training of family therapists should be different, since it requires such a profound shift in the way one thinks.

In Rhodes, Nge, Wallis, and Hunt's (2011) study on the personal effects of training on family therapists, they found that often times, learning to apply such a shift in thinking becomes challenging. They attributed this to the change in which the trainees thought about both their professional and personal lives (p. 337). In light of this, the dance of epistemology and self of the therapist development emerges. Timm and Blow (1999) observed self of the therapist work from a both-and perspective, in an attempt to validate the perceived issues of the therapist. At the same time, they also wanted to

highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of utilizing said issues as both something to be aware of as a potential stuck point for the therapist, and also, as a strength to be used in the therapy room with clients. This is a great example of how self of the therapist work can be an important tool for any therapist, and also, aligns with themes of the activities in the EAFT coursework that address these both-and perspectives.

However, implementing self of the therapist work into overwhelmed graduate school student's schedules is not an easy task. As Green (2018) stated, "Given that clinical training programs are typically rigorous and focused on highly structured curricula developed to cover as many models, theories, and practices as possible, self-of-the-therapist work has at times become marginalized and is non-existent in many training programs" (p. 252). She went on to say that "additionally, developing the means to invite students into such a reflective discussion can be challenging when students themselves may be more focused on gaining clinical competence and remembering details of models to pass comprehensive and licensure exams." (p. 252). Rogers (1974) stated an idea that offered a different way of learning:

So if I were to attempt a crude definition of what it means to learn as a whole person, I would say that it involves learning of a *unified* sort, at the cognitive, feeling and gut level, with a clear *awareness* of the different aspects of this unified learning. (p. 104)

The balance between technical understanding and utilizing the unique characteristics that one brings into the therapy room is hard to find in training programs, but often highlighted as one of the most important aspects of the therapeutic process. As de Shazer (1988) stated, "Theory and practice each influence the other, often in recursive or

mutually defining ways” (p. 70). Self of the therapist development is a process that both the client and the therapist can benefit from. Furthermore, as Simon (2006) described, “When a therapist uses a model that fits with her worldview, the client is not experiencing some abstract philosophy, but rather a therapist who is able to translate what therapy is at its best, an encounter between people” (p. 336).

Self of the Therapist

Aponte (2016) described the use of self in therapy stating, “This is about us, as clinicians, developing a conscious, purposeful and disciplined access to our humanity within our professional role in the therapeutic relationship” (p. 17). Satir (2000) highlighted the importance of self of the therapist work, as she considered the therapist to be fundamental to the course of successful therapy. She went on to explain, “There is a close relationship between what I believe and how I act. The more in touch I am with my beliefs, and acknowledge them, the more I gave myself freedom to choose how to use those beliefs” (p. 26). Timm and Blow (1999) described self of the therapist work as “the willingness of a therapist or supervisor to participate in a process that requires introspective work on issues in his or her own life, that has an impact [on] the process of therapy in both positive and negative ways” (p. 333). They went on to say:

By looking at resources provided by life experience the therapist may open up new doors for their own competency and the competency of the families with which they work. This can potentially result in interventions that would have previously eluded the therapist. (Timm & Blow, 1999, p. 350)

This relational approach to understanding oneself is what makes the training of family therapists unique as it intertwines the theory of the practice to the therapist’s own level of

awareness of self. As Carlson and Erickson (1999) explained,

This sense of awareness of the therapist's own invisible self is a learned skill in the field of family therapy, which usually encourages therapists to explain their values and beliefs according to systems theory ideas, or to any family therapy theory. (p. 56)

Therapists who explore themselves in such a way develop greater awareness of their personal issues, which in turn, can allow them to be more open and in tune to their emotions making them less reactive in therapy sessions with clients (Carlson & Erickson, 1999). In the first of its kind, Giraldez Carter's (2015) study on the effects of equine assisted activities on the personal and professional development of student therapists found that "students learned the benefits of self-reflection and awareness, especially when it came to becoming a therapist" (p. 115). Hallberg (2018) offered the following explanation for utilizing horses in this sense: "Since horses do not differentiate between the patient and the professional, the horse may respond and react to the feelings and emotions of the professional, the staff, or the volunteers just as it does to the patient" (p. 65). To expand further, Timm and Blow (1999) advocate for doing self-of-the-therapist work that explores both the restraints and resources that arise out of a therapist's life experiences. Advocating for this process, Aponte and Carlsen (2009) described that "when our worldview, conscious and intentional use of self align with our model we have reached the elevated level of skill" (p. 397).

Trotter (2010) offered an explanation as to how horses can assist therapists in discovering this when she explained, "Horses respond to a human's competency, need for control, and expectations" (p. 235). It has been noted that through self of the therapist

development, family therapists are able to employ what they already know and have in order to better understand themselves, in turn allowing them attend to the therapeutic relationship from a different perspective. Hallberg (2018) stated, “Thinking of approaching the horse the way you might a client is a useful practice” (p. 20). This is one of the key components for utilizing horses as a way to train MFT’s. As previously stated, their unique characteristics combined with the structure of the EAFT courses at NSU offers the space for therapists to explore this aspect of joining without the pressure or judgment from a human. Minuchin et al. (2013) continued:

The effective therapist enters a session with an invisible companion, carried on his or her left shoulder. One must think of it as a “homunculus”: a diminutive mythological being that looks and thinks like the therapist and can observe and reflect on the process of intervention. This invisible companion is essential, providing the therapist with the opportunity to make informed decisions about the use of the self and about exploring the roads not yet taken. (p. 8)

Through the use of EAFT it may be possible for therapists to gain a clearer understanding of their own personal “invisible companion” and uncover the confidence to employ it.

One of the core objectives in the course is for students to “demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the self of the therapist within their MFT model of choice through reflection and process throughout the term” (Green, 2016, p. 1). The EAFT coursework, specifically the advanced course, directly addresses the expansion of the self of the therapist. It is important to note that the EAFT courses are not the only classes within the MFT program at NSU that address the self of the therapist in an intentional way; students have multiple opportunities to explore this concept at various levels of the

program. However, as previously described, through tactile, experiential activities with the horses, students learn to conduct equine sessions and interventions, while integrating family therapy concepts and self of the therapist literature to enhance their clinical development in a radically different way than in a traditional classroom setting. For example, Green (2019) described the “Labeling” activity where participants symbolize labels onto the horse (with non toxic paint) that society has given them that they do not agree with. After a discussion, they have the option to edit, or wash away any labels and add ones that they agree with. She described the experience of participating in such a session:

This activity simultaneously allows therapists to understand this experience from a client’s perspective, and as well, to explore how their own and others’ ideas about themselves (personally and professionally) contribute to or detract from their ability to be fully present in the therapy room. (p. 153)

These experiential activities such as the process described above, have the power for transformative experiences to unfold for MFT student therapists in training. Specifically, through enhancing self of the therapist growth with bringing awareness to difficult areas, while also highlighting strengths and providing avenues for change in perspective and reframes of resources. How this translates into a traditional talk therapy session is the focus for this study.

Self of the therapist development has been studied in various forms, generally surrounding the training of family therapists in the capacity of supervision or as it relates to their preferred model. However, as mentioned above, with the training of family therapists requiring such a significant shift in thinking, it makes sense that self of the

therapist development be implemented differently as well. As Hallberg (2018) highlighted, “The greatest gift of all that the horse can bring to psychotherapists is the gift of authenticity. Above and beyond everything, isn’t this what therapists are required to be?” (p. 239).

Summary

While the field of Equine Assisted Therapies and Learning is expanding, there is still much room for growth, specifically when it comes to its utilization in university settings. Hallberg (2018) touches upon this when she described looking into 28 academic programs of which only two offer graduate course work on the subject and stated that there is no “agreed upon body of knowledge that guides the development of academic curriculum” (p. 79). Furthermore, she described how the university setting plays an important role in the development of the field through “empirical research and scholarly collaboration” (p. 80). Thus far, with the exception of the previously mentioned study by Giraldez Carter, the research is client focused. There have been no other studies on how equine assisted activities influence student therapists in training. In 2016, Lee, Dakin and McLure found only four studies published in peer-reviewed journals and 20 unpublished master’s theses and doctoral dissertations that were directly related to EAP practice (p. 244). This evidence suggests that the gap in literature left room for a new inquiry on the subject. In chapter III, I acknowledge the methodology used to explore this new application and discuss the design implemented to conduct this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Role of the Researcher

As a family therapist, I am privileged to see the world in terms of context and patterns. The meaning of my own experiences as a student who has taken both the Introduction and Advanced EAFT courses at NSU, as well as serving as an intern for one year at Stable Place providing EAFT and EAL and furthermore, supporting as the teaching assistant for the Introduction course made it exciting to be reflective and inquire about the feedback students would share during class and discussion posts. My clinical portfolio was also heavily influenced and based off my experiences with EAFT coursework as it related to my evolution of becoming a therapist; and now my dissertation clearly is of interest to EAFT as well. Since I had profound, transformative experiences in the EAFT courses this naturally would lead to bias on my part as the researcher. I also had an advantage, as I was familiar with the language and shared understandings of the EAFT coursework. For example, participants did not have to go into detail about activities or more in depth about certain experiences, as I was familiar with the concept already or was in the course with them when it occurred. This created a different interview context than if the interviewer had been someone who had no experience with the coursework and thus would need deeper explanations, have more questions or struggle with defining implicit ideas. Furthermore, I have also functioned as a supervision assistant for various practicums in BTI and have witnessed therapy sessions of students who have taken the EAFT courses and students who have not. Through my own personal observations, I perceived that the students who participated in EAFT coursework were much more confident in their therapeutic position. I also noticed that

they were more willing to take chances and try various interventions. Furthermore, these students also presented to be more empathic yet assertive in their interactions with clients but also in their feedback to their colleagues. This experience confirmed for me the importance of this study.

Given this bias of my familiarity and positive regard to EAFT, a method that fosters multiple realities and highlighted the participant's experiences is important to the process of this study. Chenail (2011) stated:

When performing as a discovery-oriented research instrument, qualitative researchers tend to construct study-specific sets of questions that are open-ended in nature so the investigators provide openings through which interviewees can contribute their insiders' perspectives with little or no limitations imposed by more closed-ended questions. (p. 256)

It is this insider's perspective that I am seeking to bring to light through this study and remain curious about my participants' experiences. With that being said, the postmodern approach of the "not knowing" stance that I take as a therapist resonated for this study as well, from my perspective as a researcher. As Anderson and Goolishian (1992) state, "Not-knowing requires that our understandings, explanations, and interpretations in therapy not be limited by prior experiences and theoretically formed truths, and knowledge" (p. 28). This statement also applies to diminish my bias in that I first validated and honored the participant's perspective. In other words, the participants are the experts on their experiences, and I am the expert on conducting the research. Only then did I apply my professional lens, since it is first and foremost about their experiences not mine. Jankowski, Clark, and Ivey (2000) stated "a 'not-knowing' stance can extend to

a variety of relational contexts such as teaching, conducting therapy, or engaging in research” (p. 248). In this study, I considered my participants to be the experts of their own experience, allowing me the maneuverability to conduct this study without the limitation of my own experiences. With this thought process in mind, the interviews unfolded as a collaborative conversation, which will be evidenced further on in this manuscript.

Qualitative Research

Finlay (2011) offered the following definition: “Qualitative research aims to be inductive and exploratory, typically asking ‘what’ and ‘how’, and posing questions related to description and understanding” (p. 8). Qualitative research assists researchers in understanding the context in which people behave through the use of organic observation and open-ended questions. Considering that fact, it is a great fit for interpreting EAFT as those are also the two main roles of the therapist during EAFT sessions. Furthermore, each activity is different, and outcome is dependent on the client’s or student’s experience and interpretation, similar to therapy.

With that being said, it makes sense to utilize a qualitative method, as some things cannot be evaluated in such linear terms. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Furthermore, Gergen, Josselson, and Freeman (2015) described qualitative research as a means to “reduce or remove the gap between scientist and society” (p. 7). Utilizing a qualitative framework allowed me to explore this unique range of experiences as it relates to the MFT’s self of the therapist development. Experiential learning involves multiples

phases of practice, reflection, and observation, all of which have been identified as important skills of therapist development. For these reasons, EAFT and EAL fit well with the framework of qualitative research, as it is a discovery-oriented method.

As discussed in previous chapters, with the training of MFT's requiring such a drastic shift in focus, it would make sense to implement self of the therapist work in a different context as well. To highlight how and why such a shift needs to occur, Auerswald (1987) stated:

Family therapy began as a movement sparked by a small group of behavioral scientists who challenged the orthodoxies of medical and psychodynamic therapies. This movement signaled the beginning of an epistemological shift, the roots of which can be found early in this century in the physical sciences. (p. 1)

So family therapy, at its root, requires a radical shift because it started off with breaking from the traditional norm. That different context described above, for implementing self of the therapist work in this case is EAFT. Since EAFT coursework is applied through the MFT program at NSU, it is relevant to make transparent how students are measured. The program as a whole utilizes the outcome based education model (OBE) and Core Competencies (CC) which as Nelson et al. (2007) pointed out, "focus on knowledge and skill-based outcomes, helping trainees translate their coursework and supervised experiences into skills and competencies" (p. 420). Additionally, the role of the faculty being part of the learning process and not separate is another key proponent in the overall cohesiveness of the topic in question. This, combined with students taking an active part in their education, is isomorphic to the EAFT style of training MFT's. This relational method is congruent with the EAFT process for self of the therapist development, since

the student takes an active role during the activity and relates it back to their skills as therapists. Furthermore, given that each activity has the fluidity of different outcomes, and no wrong or right way of completing tasks further highlights that the EAFT model is an excellent fit for this type of learning. Taking this into account, the process focus of EAFT is a good fit for the discovery-oriented nature of qualitative research. The qualitative method used to explore this experience as it relates to self of the therapist development is Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR).

Interpersonal Process Recall

Larsen, Flesaker, and Stege (2008) offered the following definition:

Interpersonal process recall (IPR) is a qualitative interview approach designed to access client and caregiver experiences as close to the moment of interaction as possible. It is used to access individuals' conscious yet unspoken experiences as they occurred at the time of the interpersonal interaction under investigation. (p. 19).

Furthermore, Cashwell (1994) stated that IPR “empowers counselors to understand and act upon perceptions to which they may otherwise not attend” (p. 1). IPR originated as a method for studying therapeutic interactions (Kagan, Schauble, Resnikoff, Danish, & Krathwohl, 1969, p. 365). Kagan (1973), who invented IPR, observed that through the use of video recording, people could recall rich experiences as they observe themselves within a given context, which can lead to profound relational processing of relating to experiences (p. 1). IPR sets up the platform for students to observe themselves in their clinical context and create a reflective practice. Furthermore as Larsen, et al., (2008) state, “As a process-focused interview method IPR allows researchers to obtain firsthand

insights into professional interactions through observation and by directly asking the client and the professional caregiver to comment independently on professional interactions as they unfold” (p. 19). Furthermore, Meekurns, Macaskie, and Kupur (2016) described that “Within a training context, IPR involves trainees in the roles of therapist and client reviewing an audio or video recording of a previously recorded skills practice session, accompanied by one or more peers and/or tutors” (p. 504). This process is isomorphic to the style of clinical training MFT students at NSU receive in the Brief Therapy Institutes family therapy clinic and is the approach utilized in this study.

Larsen, et al., (2008) highlight the importance of video-recording, stating, “By viewing a video-recording of their actual session during IPR, interviewees are cued to remember various reactions and ideas that occurred during the session but might not readily come to mind unassisted” (p. 21). Kagan (1973) went on to say that

It is one thing for students to recognize and understand the importance of the here-and-now, of an interaction, but it is another thing for them to actually incorporate this understanding into their behavior to learn to respond to others in new ways and especially to risk being more direct with others in the immediacy of the interaction. (p. 43)

The goal of IPR in this study is to assist therapists in recalling and understanding how, and if, the phenomenon of EAFT influences their self of the therapist development in a traditional talk therapy setting with clients.

Research Design

For the purposes of this study, the clinical training that participants received was in Nova Southeastern University’s Brief Therapy Institute’s family therapy clinic. Family

therapy students receive live supervision through a one-way mirror in the clinic from licensed AAMFT Approved Supervisors in the context of practicum teams. During this process, clients are given the option to consent to video record their sessions for training, academic, and professional purposes. Those video recorded talk therapy sessions of students who have taken both EAFT courses served as the platform from which the interview conversations unfold. These conversations are the data for this study.

As discussed above, a qualitative method, Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) was used to conduct this research study, in order to uncover the meanings that students give to their experiences in EAFT courses as they relate to self of the therapist development in traditional talk therapy sessions. Given the context of this study and nature of self of the therapist development, students attributed different significance to various activities in EAFT as it relates to their professional growth. As Larsen et al. (2008) stated, “The IPR process slows down the interview conversation, giving interviewees time to meditate on and verbalize complex experiences” (p. 21). Furthermore, Rubin and Rubin (2005) pointed out, “IPR participants are integral partners in the conversational process and have the opportunity to share in the work and the excitement of discovery and meaning making” (p. 20). This method allowed for MFT students in training to reflect on their experiences with EAFT and self of the therapist development through a collaborative conversation while digesting the transferal to a traditional talk therapy session. IPR allows for the fluidity of the participant and researcher to rewind and stop the recording whenever a new inquiry appears and discuss the importance of the moment (Chenail, 2011).

The data comes from the interviews, which consisted of two parts: the IPR

Review of the MFT student's video recorded talk therapy session and secondly, the semi-structured interview questions. For the purpose of collecting this data, the video recorded talk therapy sessions with clients at NSU's BTI family therapy clinic had signed permission from clients for professional and educational use. The students also signed a consent form to participate in this study, which was approved prior to the beginning of the study by NSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The video recording must have occurred after successful completion of both EAFT courses; it was the student's most recent video recorded session from the start of this study. The students who choose to participate reviewed any 15 minutes segments of the video recorded talk therapy session with myself acting as the researcher. During this time, the student and myself were able to pause or rewind to make a comment or question on the video recording that had to do with self of the therapist or EAFT. Larsen et al. (2008) described how IPR "allows the researcher to observe and explore the interactions occurring within the counseling session, with firsthand clarification from the actual participant(s)" (p. 20). This aspect of IPR further allowed me to collaborate with the interviewee and diminish any of my own bias that might be present. This also served as a process for member checking which aids in the legitimacy of the study: the researcher summarizes the information and then inquires to clarify correctness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, Mruck and Breuer (2003) pointed out that in modern day qualitative research, researchers are encouraged to talk about themselves during the research process, which is why keeping a journal becomes valuable to the process of the study. Having a reflective and reflexive practice of journaling throughout the study allowed me to become aware of how my position influenced my research process (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 325). As

Janesick (1998) stated, “The clarity of writing down one's thoughts will allow for stepping into one's inner mind and reaching further into interpretations of the behaviors, beliefs, and words we write” (p. 10). Member checking and journaling was used in order to manage my own assumptions and biases, given my own personal experiences with this work.

The conversations that unfolded during the interviews were audio recorded and downloaded into my password protected personal computer to be secured with additional encryption. I then transcribed and coded the conversations, which were secured in the same manner. For the purpose of these semi-structured interviews, a balance needed to be harvested between inquiry and process, similar to the process of EAFT in which observation and open-ended questions perform a dance. These questions offered an avenue for descriptive information about the phenomenon by allowing me to have a direction but not being restricted by other formats. The theme of these semi-structured interview questions revolved around the self of the therapist and EAFT coursework. They were framed in such a way to highlight the experiences of the MFT student therapists, including specifically, how they made sense of what they had just watched during the IPR review of their video recorded talk therapy session and how, if at all, it related to their self of the therapist development and/or EAFT coursework. For a comprehensive list of the semi structured interview questions, see Appendix C.

Participants. The participants for this study were self selected current students in NSU's MFT program. In order to ensure maximum diversity, the inclusion criteria required participants be in the Masters, Ph.D., or DMFT program who must have had successfully completed both EAFT courses at the time of the interviews. The sample size

was anticipated to be five participants as deemed appropriate enough to reach saturation. The consent form included information about the study as well as authorization for audio recording of their interview. The students were interviewed in private on NSU's campus in BTI where the therapist and client sessions are securely stored. The exclusion criteria consisted of any students who had not taken both EAFT courses (i.e., only took the Introduction course which is a pre requisite for the Advanced course) or students who are no longer active in the program (i.e., those who withdrew, moved away, or graduated).

The participation for this study was voluntary, self-selection. The recruitment process consisted of an informational flyer of invitation to students sent through e-mail. Specifically, I described information of the study, inclusion criteria, and intent to contribute to the field of MFT training and development. The students who desired to participate were given a consent form, which included details of the study and were reminded they could withdraw at any point without consequence. Once the consent form had been signed, and any questions answered, I then set a date and time for the interview.

Data collection. The data, in terms of participant's identity is de-identified, as well as the names and/or gender of clients if they were mentioned during the interview. Once the interviews and transcriptions were completed, I began a thematic analysis to interpret the data for each section, starting with Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review. Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) described thematic analyses as a way to "move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes" (p. 10). This form of interpreting data fits well with my research topic, as my focus was on the topic of this study: if and how the learning that occurs within the EAFT courses transfers

into traditional talk therapy sessions and how students utilized the experiential process of learning within the courses to further their understanding of the self of the therapist.

Miller (2018) described the steps of performing this type of analysis. First, I carefully reviewed, re-reviewed and become familiar with my data. I then transcribed the interviews and rechecked them for accuracy. Next, I coded and grouped similar themes that were relevant to the study in Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review to identify any themes that occurred across this section. I then utilized a cross-case analysis for the second section, Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview in a similar fashion as previously mentioned. I coded, identified themes and provided excerpts to support these themes.

My focus was on data in the transcribed interviews from part 1 and part 2 that represented the self of the therapist development experiences of taking the EAFT courses translating into a traditional talk therapy sessions. Lastly, I analyzed both data sets from Part One and Part two by creating a thematic map of the findings. Interviews were a maximum of 90 minutes, but guided by the participants' tolerance, so as to not make the participants fatigued or inconvenienced as to not negatively influence the data.

Ethics

The ethical considerations for this study contained multiple stages, beginning with the video recordings. The video recordings used for this study of MFT student therapists in training and their clients' sessions had all clients sign and give consent for the therapist and BTI to use their video recorded sessions with the "Authorization for use or disclosure of information for inside education and related purposes" form which includes video recordings and case note information for current and future classroom activities with

NSU-BTI and current and future clinical and qualifying exams with NSU-BTI. As well as “Authorization for use or disclosure of information for outside education and related purposes” form which includes video recordings, audio recordings, and medical record information to be used for current and future classroom activities within NSU-BTI-CPS-SHSS, current and future clinical and qualifying exams within NSU-BTI-CPS-SHSS, publications within educational journals or books, presentations at educational/professional conferences and educational activities supporting obtainment by students of necessary supervision credit. Furthermore, all video recordings were securely kept in NSU’s BTI family therapy clinic.

Given the content of this study and nature of the topics being discussed, a balance of process and content must be fostered with the possibility for vulnerable conversations to arise. I took special care to ensure participants’ security as well as advise that they can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences after they had consented. All information was encrypted with a password on my password protected computer. Furthermore, official authorization from NSU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to first contact with participants. Lastly, I adhered to the AAMFT Code of Ethics, specifically Standard V Research and Publication numbers 5.1-5.9, which states: “Marriage and family therapists respect the dignity and protect the welfare of research participants, and are aware of applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards governing the conduct of research” (AAMFT Code of Ethics, 2018). Furthermore, it is important to note that since this study involved students, all students who participated in this study had already completed the courses and did not need to worry about their grades

being affected. Furthermore, to manage my own assumptions and biases, I employed journaling throughout my study and member checking throughout the IPR interviews.

Summary

Creswell (2013) stated, “Qualitative research, then, should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives” (p. 26). A qualitative approach allowed me to gain insight to the participants’ complex experiences in regards to EAFT and self of the therapist development in traditional talk therapy sessions. Since this topic is relatively new and little to no research has been done on this new inquiry, I was interested in understanding the transference of this model to traditional talk therapy sessions and self of the therapist development. This research method allowed me to remain curious and learn from my participants as well as serve as a platform to change how students, professors and universities with MFT training programs approach self of the therapist development.

Green (2013) highlighted this work by stating:

Additionally, we have found the horses to be an invaluable tool in training and supervising therapists. Through a series of carefully designed exercises, we encourage therapists to explore who they are as therapists and what they bring into the room with them each time they meet a new client. Unlike in a conventional supervision session, we are not focused on content, therapeutic model, or technique. Rather, using the horses as their clients, therapists explore their typical ways of assessing and developing connections, their ways of managing ‘stuckness,’ as well as their approach to change. We have found that

therapists learn a great deal about who they are as therapists, and who they would like to become. (p. 257)

It is my goal that this research study expand on the above statement—to highlight that MFT's in training can be reflective of their change in regards to self of the therapist development through EAFT into traditional talk therapy sessions and open to unique methods that can provide a rich framework for similar experiences to future therapists.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to explore if and how the learning that occurs in the NSU Department of Family Therapy Programs' EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions, specifically within the use of self of the therapist. Through the qualitative approach of Interpersonal Process Recall, I explored how MFT students utilized the experiential process of learning within the EAFT courses to further their understanding of the self of the therapist. The data is made up of conversations between the MFT students and myself. These conversations manifested from reviewing their video recorded talk therapy session and engaging them within a series of semi-structured interview questions. These interviews consisted of two parts. The first part involved viewing a 15-minute segment of their most recent video recorded talk therapy session that occurred after successful completion of both EAFT courses. I invited the students to read the purpose of the study prior to watching the video recording, in an effort to allow them to become familiar with the purpose of the proposed study. Once I had confirmed that the students had read the purpose, I asked if they had any questions. I then encouraged them to pause or rewind at any point during the IPR review of their video recorded talked therapy session, as per the process of IPR, in which they felt a moment related to the study—specifically involving anything they noticed about their use of self of the therapist and EAFT coursework as they saw fit. The second portion was comprised of a collaborative conversation stemming from ten semi-structured interview questions, which were open ended around the themes of self of the therapist and EAFT coursework. This allowed the students to express their experiences and create meaning. The comprehensive list of Semi-Structured Interview Questions can be found in

Appendix C.

When it comes to the data analysis of this research study, I found it appropriate to use the term findings as the conversations that took place were an unfolding process. I say this because as I was exploring the experiences of MFT student therapists, I discovered that the conversations became more reflective as the IPR interview progressed. There were a total of five interviews. I reviewed the audio-recorded interviews multiple times and transcribed them to perform a thematic analysis.

In this chapter, I present the findings as well as the process of the IPR interviews, my experience, and the themes that were discovered. The first step involved performing a thematic analysis of part one of the interview; Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review where the participants and myself viewed the 15-minute segment of their video recorded talk therapy session and they free associated their thoughts with little influence from myself. Next, I completed a cross-case analysis for the second part of the interview; Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview, containing the ten semi-structured interview questions. Lastly, I combined both data sets and discussed the thematic map.

Data Analysis

The research study consisted of five participants, all in the PhD program of Family Therapy at NSU who had taken both EAFT courses prior to the date of which the video recorded talk therapy session occurred. Participants were de-identified and referred to as “P1-5”. If a participant mentioned the name and/or gender of a client during the interview, they were simply referred to as “client” in the transcription to preserve confidentiality. To maintain their anonymity, names of the participants were not written

on any documents other than their signed consent forms, which were securely stored. The audio recordings were downloaded to my personal password protected computer and encrypted in de-identified files. I also kept a journal of my thoughts and processes throughout the interviews, which I discuss further on.

This study consisted of a single interview, which lasted no more than 90-minutes and, was distinguished into two parts. Both data sets were carefully and meticulously reviewed several times and then transcribed and reviewed several more times. I performed a thematic analysis on both sets of data; Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review and Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview. Interview Part One consisted of a combined thematic analysis of the participant's free associated thoughts. For Interview Part two, I performed a cross-case thematic analysis. Lastly, I combined both sets of data into a thematic map and discuss the dominant themes in depth.

Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review. During the first part of the interview process, the participant was instructed to gather their most recent video recorded talk therapy session, which occurred after their successful completion of both the Introduction and Advanced EAFT courses. They were sent the "purpose of the study" information and consent form prior to the meeting and also supplied with this information again upon the beginning of the interview. They were given a copy of their signed consent form. The participants were then advised again that we would be watching a fifteen minute segment of this video recorded talk therapy session and they could pause or rewind however many times they deemed fit and whenever they felt a relevant thought they would like to discuss. Once they understood

this process, they were instructed to begin the recording wherever they wanted, and the IPR review began.

For this portion of the data analysis I performed a thematic analysis of each of the participants thoughts. Some participants paused for discussion more than others, but all had at least one moment they wanted to discuss something relevant that came up. The Coding chart for this process can be found in Appendix D. I decided to make a pie chart to have another view of the frequency of themes discussed across all five of the participants' free associations.

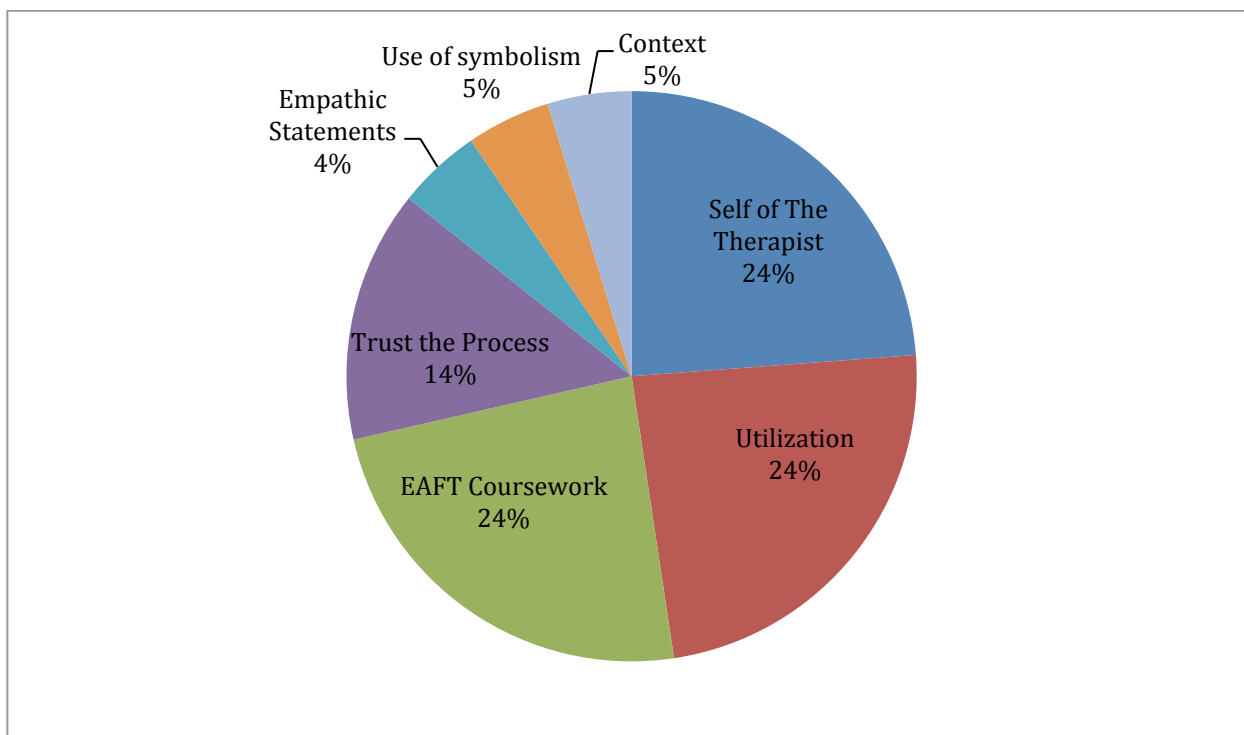


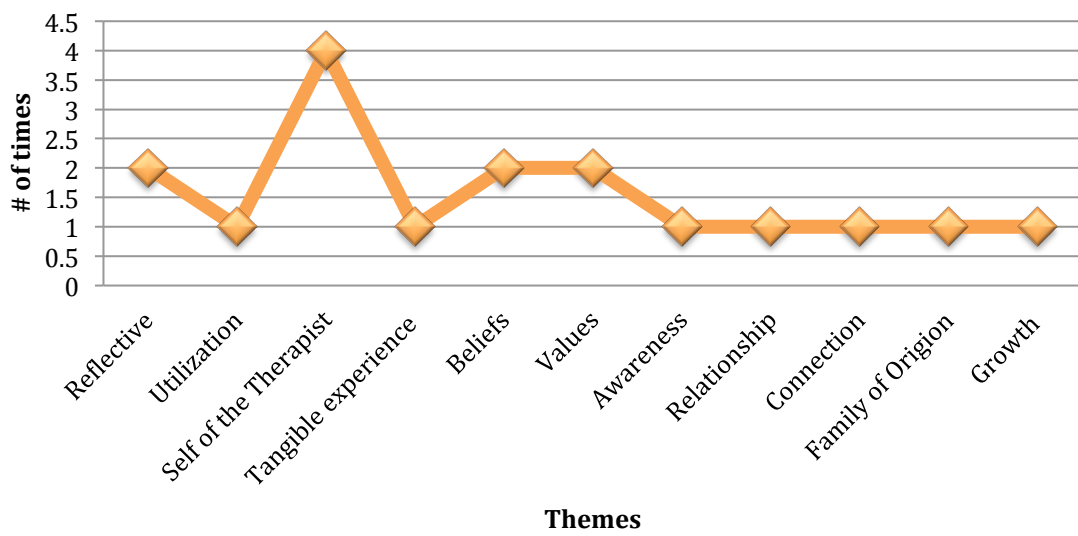
Figure 1. The figure shows the frequency of themes in Part One that were discussed during Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review.

The above chart highlights the frequency of themes discussed from the transcripts and excerpts that were used in the initial thematic analysis to support these themes. *Self of The Therapist*, *EAFT Coursework*, and *Utilization* were all dominant themes across all

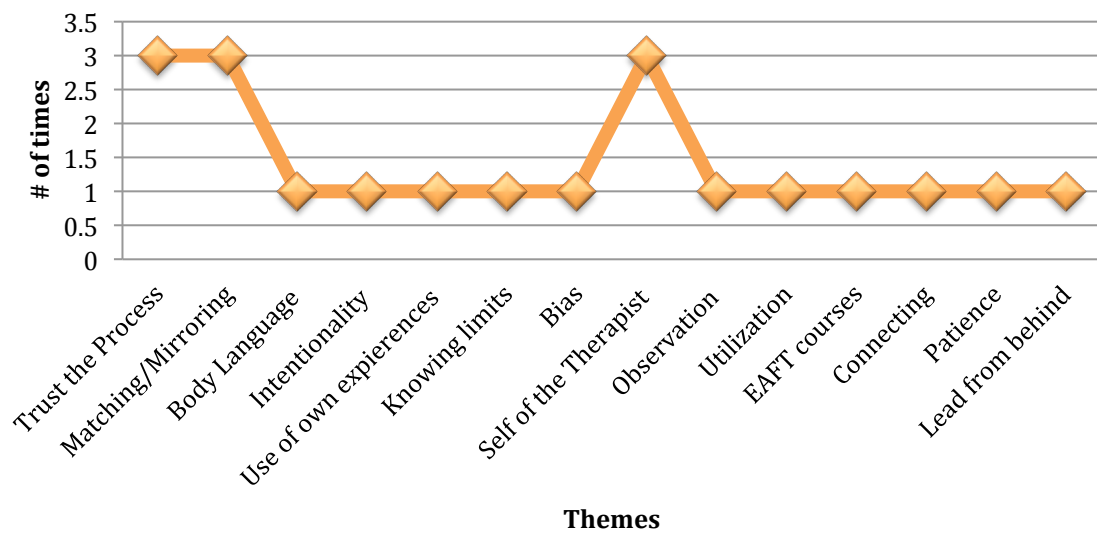
five participants' free associations. *Trust the Process* is also considered a dominant theme for this study as it was identified by four out of the five participants. *Context, Use of Symbolism* and *Empathic Statements* were also themes.

Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview. The second part of the interview was a more collaborative discussion based off of the ten semi-structured interview questions I developed which can be found in Appendix C. These conversations provided a rich context of the participant's experiences and meaning making. I performed a more in depth cross-case thematic analysis to discover the themes for this section. The coding chart for this process can be found in Appendix E, which breaks down each participant's answers based off of the corresponding questions, assigned a code, theme, and excerpt supporting said theme. Next, I took each of the ten questions and created a scatterplot chart combined with each of the themes from all 5 participants interviews. This allowed me to see how many times each theme was discussed in each question individually and together.

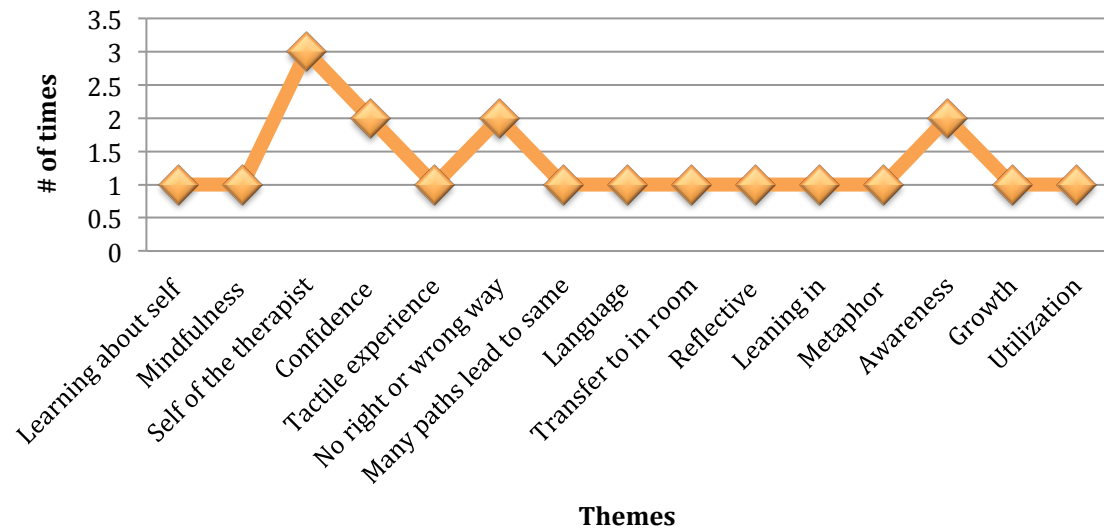
Question 1



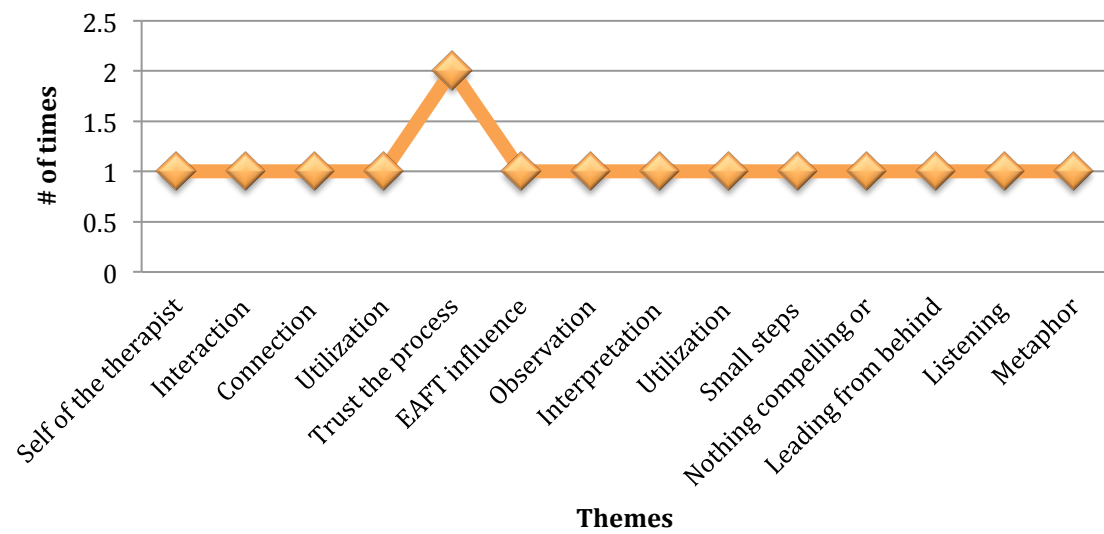
Question 2



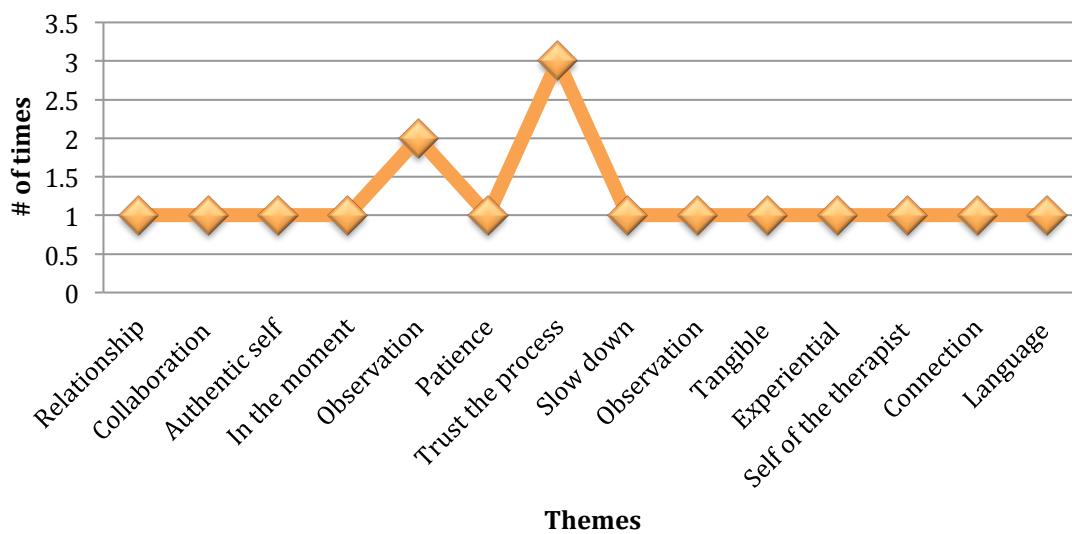
Question 3



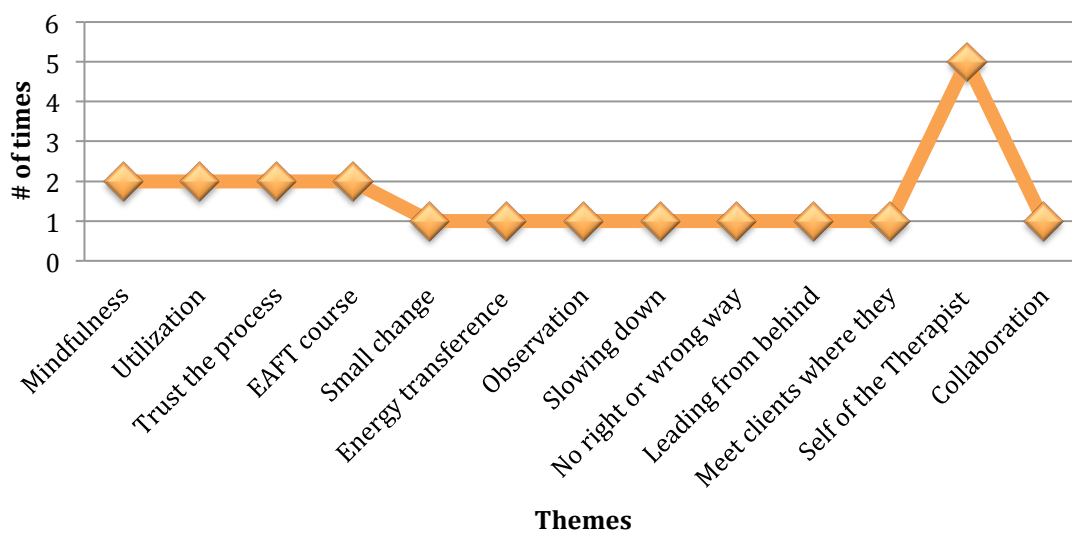
Question 4



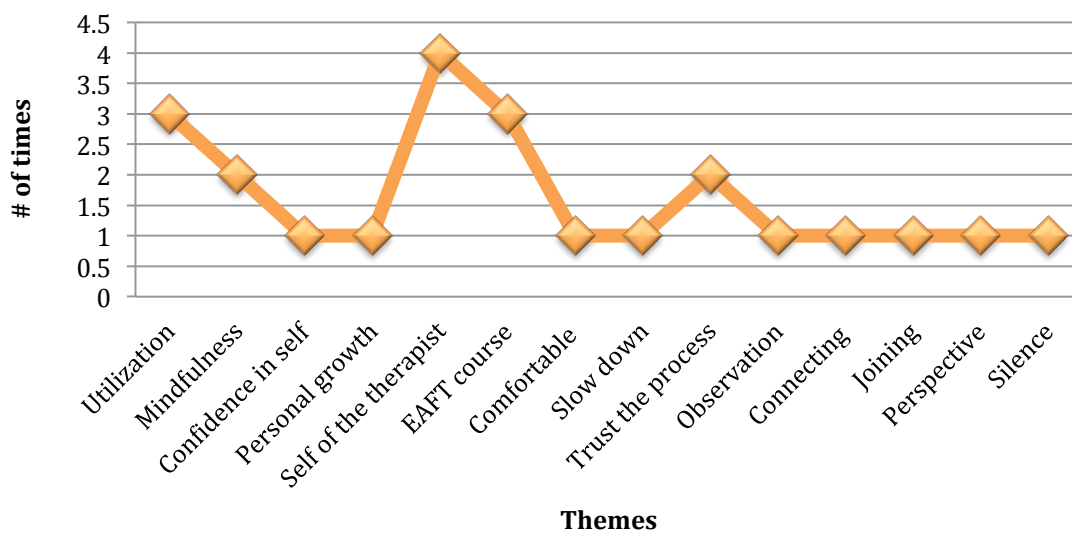
Question 5



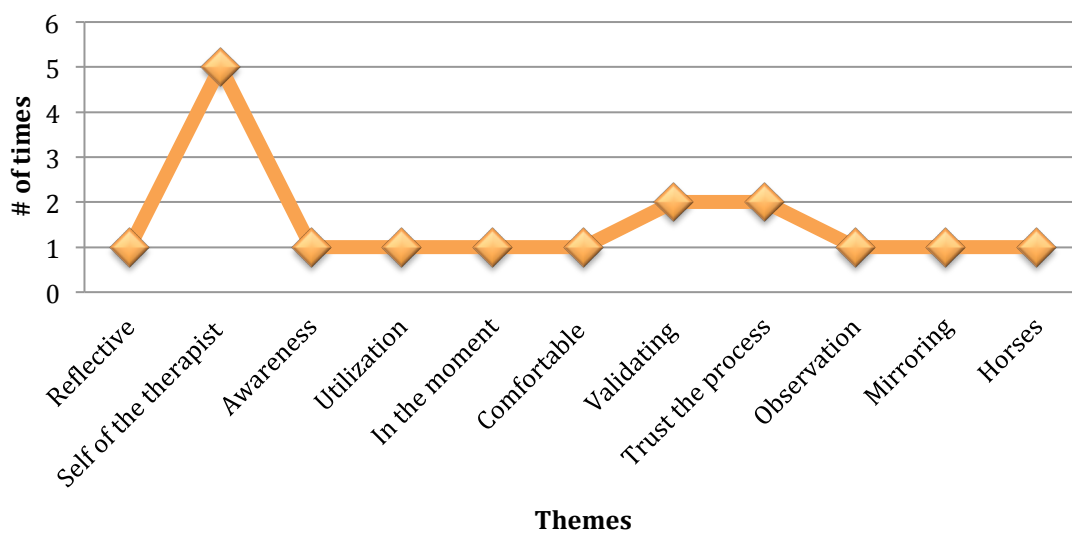
Question 6



Question 7



Question 8



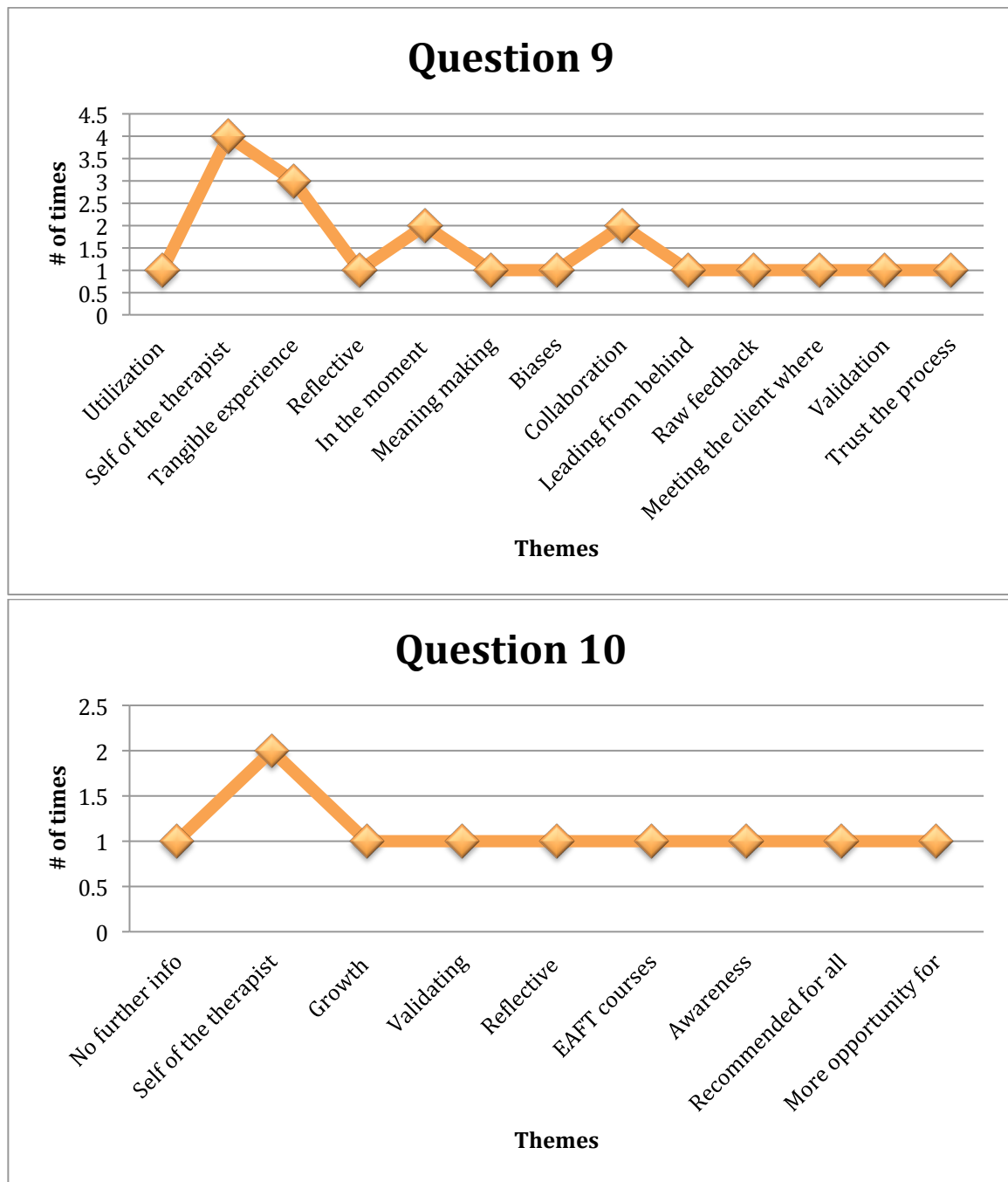


Figure 2. The figure shows the frequency of themes discussed in each of the ten semi-structured interview questions from the combined cross-case analysis thematic analysis of each of the 5 participants in Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview.

The above figures emphasize the frequency of themes across each question involving all five participants. *Self of The Therapist*, *EFT Coursework*, and *Utilization*,

along with *Trust the Process* were all dominant themes across all five participants' responses.

Interpretations

The data suggests that the EAFT coursework does translate into traditional talk therapy sessions, both in and around the theme of *Self of the Therapist*. Since the themes suggested this was happening, I wanted to define each dominant theme, and I combined the datasets to see what if anything overlapped.

In order to support the emergent themes, excerpts from the transcribed interviews were used to demonstrate how the participants created meaning. While the EAFT courses were the context for development of the self of the therapist, the traditional talk therapy session was the foundation for where the conversations unfolded. Across both data sets, *Self of the Therapist*, *EAFT Coursework*, *Utilization*, and *Trust the Process* were dominant themes.

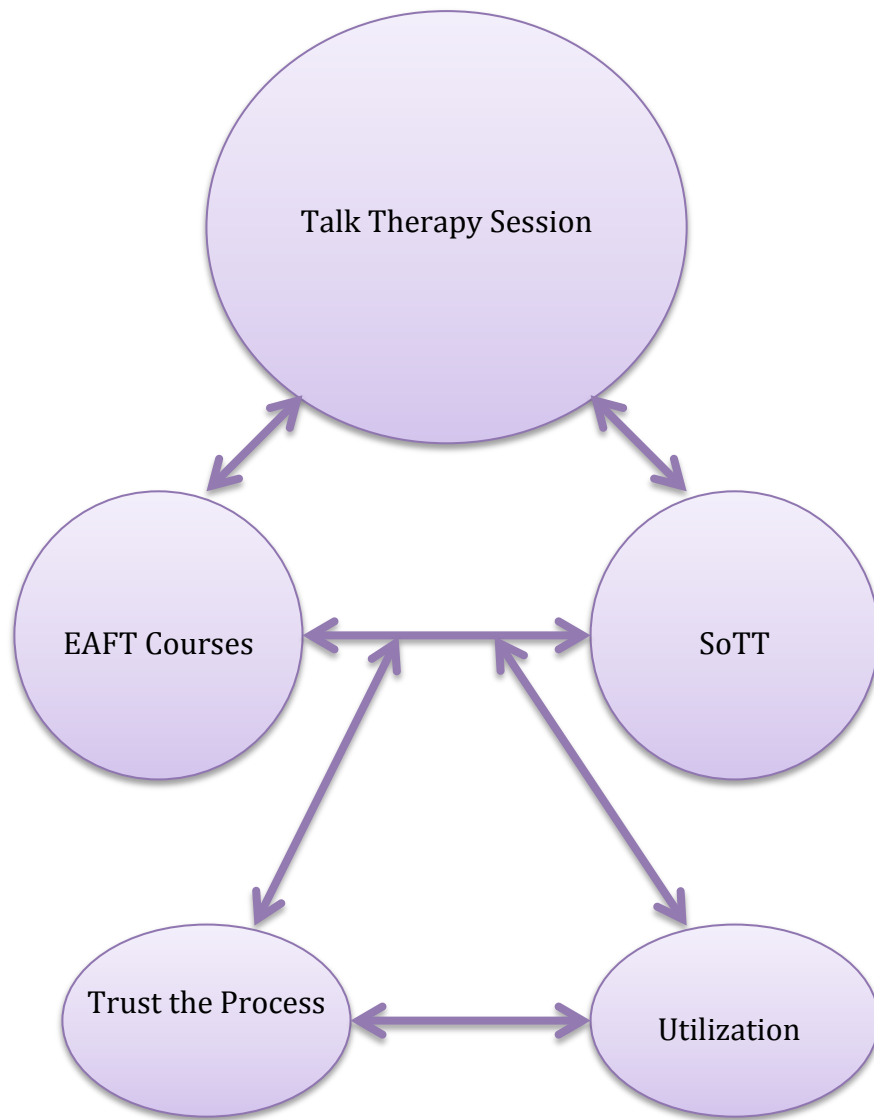


Figure 3. The figure shows the dominant themes across both data sets and their relationship to each other.

Traditional Talk Therapy Session is defined as a talk therapy session in a standard room that took place at the Brief Therapy Institute at NSU, which is the community-based training clinic for the MFT department. The video recording of the traditional talk therapy session served as the platform from which the IPR review and interviews manifested. For the purpose of this study, I defined the dominant themes. Themes 1 and 2 have been thoroughly explained in Chapter 2 of this manuscript, however, I briefly define

them as they relate to the data.

Theme 1: EAFT Coursework

These courses are defined as both the Introduction and Advanced Equine Assisted Family Therapy courses, which are offered as electives to Masters, PhD and DMFT students in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Nova Southeastern University. These courses include a maximum of 12 students and are taught in a hybrid format meaning they alternate each week between in room class and experiential work with the horses at Stable Place Inc. The MFT students who participated in this study offered many different examples of how the EAFT coursework influences their work. They were vulnerable and shared their experiences of what the EAFT courses offered them:

P2: I always remember I talk about class and going through equine classes and to me I learned more about myself as an individual and as a clinician in those classes then any other classes that I had taken so there's something about that putting it into action in the doing sense, the experiencing sense that really allowed you to self reflect in a different way

P5: The horse was like I'm going to do this, so that teaches lessons that you can't learn in the classroom the same way as it teaches you how to be, to move off the walls from where you're sitting with your clients because I think it opens a lot of space to learn that there's no way that you can meet someone where you want it.

P1: I don't think if I hadn't had so much of self of the therapist practice and experience say through the [EAFT] classes I would be able to be at that position where I'm not confounded by that model but I can just use it to inform me and so

each time I've stopped [the video recorded talk therapy session] that's kind of been my thought process

P4: I think that our work at the barn has definitely, like sometimes I kind of see it like peek its head in my sessions . . . whether I realize it in the moment or not.

P3: . . . a traumatic event so [client] was moved here for safety reasons. Um so again I think that being in that new environment and the barn is a different environment, you also have to pay attention to things that are going on. . . . I think the barn and horses teach that, to pay attention to multiple things at once.

The experiences of these students emphasize the way the EAFT coursework influences who they are in a traditional talk therapy session, which as they highlighted, would not have been possible in a regular class format.

Theme 2: Self of the Therapist

As Timm and Blow (1999) explain, "self of the therapist work is the openness of the therapist to take a look inside themselves and work on their own issues in such a way that they can become aware of what they bring into the room" (p. 333). Along with looking at themselves, being aware of what they bring into the room is key for the definition of this theme as it related to this particular study. Below are examples of each five of the participant's responses related to the theme of self of the therapist through their work with the EAFT courses and how it's translated into traditional talk therapy sessions.

P1: Body language . . . my use of body language, that's something that made me connect to that self of the therapist piece cause that was one of those things I recognized so much when I was in the classes um doing equine

P2: Back in the day I might have engaged and had to give [client] an answer or my opinion but now days being more comfortable with myself and in silence . . . that's one of my biggest things out at equine would be just letting things unfold and not really worry about having to hit every point or coming up with some elaborate plan

P3: I saw growth, um for me big time after taking the [equine] courses, just so much more awareness um you know I was always a person who was comfortable in doing therapy it was never like too nerve wracking for me to do but for me especially doing stuff you know like self of the therapist and seeing my abilities and things that I'm able to do...in the room I see so much growth because of my experience with equine um I see a lot of like peace of mind

P4: I was actually uncomfortable you know kind of connecting with the horse. Um and so I was able to identify that as a potential weakness because as a therapist, how am I supposed to conduct therapy if I'm not willing to connect with the person. Um so that was kind of a big shift for me in the class, and I can't remember when it happened but it was probably at about the half way mark and so that's when I kind of started focusing in the activities of connecting with the horse...

P5: . . . that was my thing with the horses I didn't want my feet to be broken so then that's how I figured out that I was also using that metaphor with my relationship with [client] because it was . . . ok I shouldn't be seeing a client with such a disorder and I have no experience and I was just in my second practicum when [client] came in and so I was not working yet with regular clients I only had the BTI I wasn't a registered intern I wasn't even half way with my classes . . . you know what I'm saying it was a lot it was intimidating. . . [client] was the horse to me. I grew up a lot in this

relationship with this client umm because it made me, it showed me a different area that I had never seen of a human being, just like the horses.

Each of the five participants had different definitions and meanings associated to what self of the therapist meant to them. The above examples highlight how different paths, or in this case, different definitions can all lead to the same destination. As part of the work in equine, as discussed in previous chapters, during the activities, there are no right or wrong ways to complete them. Jarrell (2005) highlighted the importance of this non-normative stance; he stated:

I always tell my participants that they can't do anything wrong in my sessions; how they show up with the horse is how they show up in the world. I explain to them that what they do here is what they do in the world, and if they would like to change we can practice that. (p. 42)

This similar concept applies to self of the therapist and how each had their own manifestation of it with no right or wrong way implanting it because it would look different for everyone. It was interesting to see how the therapists conceptualized their work and use of self in the room. They all seemed to have similar meanings around awareness of themselves in the room and how they interacted with clients differently based off this.

Theme 3: Utilization Serves as Two-fold

This particular definition of utilization, for the purpose of this study, is grounded in the ideas of Milton Erickson. O'Hanlon and Martin (1992) stated, "Erickson had an approach he called the 'Utilization Approach.' The term Utilization Approach is just a tasteful way of saying, "use whatever the person brings into therapy" (p. 5). In terms of

utilization O'Hanlon and Martin (1992) go on to explain, "We don't want to try to force people in any sort of direction or take it on ourselves to make them do things or to open up the possibility of failure" (p. 4). As one participant noted in regards to the EAFT courses:

P5: So I think that's what I learned as a therapist in equine to be able to acknowledge ok you don't want to move from there but you're going to let me paint on you, so I'll follow you . . . and I'm going to work from here.

The above statement references the experience this student had as a participant during one of the EAFT courses. During this activity at the barn, participants are encouraged to connect with a horse in such a way that it will allow them to finger paint labels, in the form of words or symbols, that society has given them and that they do not necessarily agree with. After, participants are then asked to wash away these labels, which some horses are not too fond of bathing, and then paint new labels onto the horse that they do accept or would want for themselves. Often times, it is a dance to connect with the horse in such a way to have it hold still long enough to paint on, sometimes participants will follow the horse around the arena in all different ways before they figure out how to connect and leave the impression. This student's reflection was a beautiful metaphor of how she learned to translate that into the traditional talk therapy session.

Another moment that a student noted as significant was the way they learned to utilize being in the moment in the traditional talk therapy session from their experiences with the EAFT courses:

P1: . . . utilize what they are providing me in that moment as information to inform my next question um rather than having that list of things I had to check

off like those boxes, so that's like the main thing I would probably say is what I noticed in all of my therapy sessions after the classes.

I stated that utilization served as two-fold because participants spoke of how they felt they were able to literally utilize information the clients were bringing to them, which was new and something they learned from EAFT. As one participant stated:

P2: I found that that's a big part of my work and it's remembering those little tiny things that you can utilize at different moments that you can help elicit certain strengths and help challenge a client and bring it up just to be curious, for me that utilization is so important

Another form of utilization I found in this theme is utilizing what they had learned at equine, whether it was a concept or actual activity to bring into the room. For example:

P5: I also use it in my practice the activities that we use like with the blindfolds with the kids, I do that with the kids following through with the parents like the head is the mother . . . a lot of metaphors are very important for clients to see the relationship they have with others and with themselves.

This participant explained how through utilizing what they learned about processing content at the barn, they were able to relate that back into a traditional talk therapy session in discussing behaviors. Another example of utilization by a participant in terms of activities occurred when a participant stated:

P3: I think a lot of work that I had done at the barn um exercise wise helps show the process and how people process situations or how they approach them and how they lay them out and um through them doing particular activities or specific things um they are able to see uh you know and as a therapist or somebody who is helping them

there is alright like you used a very good skill to get through this obstacle course or activity and you know we talk about it and continue to reinforce from that activity so they can continue to use it in other places. I can see some relation there in reference to me asking if they recognize behaviors.

This theme of Utilization, also ties into the last theme, Trust the Process, in that through utilizing, it removes confining restraints of constructed meanings of how therapy should be. Instead this process opens the avenue for therapists to trust the process of the course the therapeutic conversation takes and in turn, to trust themselves.

Theme 4: Trust the Process

Within this theme, it appears that the meaning of trust takes on a new role for therapists. Meaning that they were able to not be so stuck in their heads about what they were “supposed to be doing” and they had a new sense of maneuverability and space to utilize themselves in the room, rather than a pre-determined set of questions or being confined by a model of therapy. They trusted the progression of the process to unfold rather than getting stuck in content.

P2: . . . just a matter of being flexible and being open to that process where here I think its the same thing I’m open to whatever or whoever he wants to bring into the room and whichever way we want to go and I’m comfortable knowing I can navigate any of those situations no matter what it is that comes in and I think that the barn helped with that because it gave us a lot of examples of things we kind of didn’t think would come up come up and then you have a chance to respond to those and see how you would handle that.

P3: I decided to just wait and let [client] process what they are feeling, talk about it a little more and then just pick up on some of the things that [client] had mentioned um which really remind me of my time with the horses of really just being in the moment and you know if I ask a question just let it resonate and be there and just not feel the need to respond or say anything to is just see what happens.

P5: . . . what was important to [client] so it was not the same thing as what was important to me so I learned a lot from the horses that when you have a client its not about you . . . doing your job its about them showing you what's important to them.

At the end of the interviews, the general consensus was that the participants had meaningful reflections and at times, even surprised themselves in connections they made. Similar to the experience in the EAFT courses, using the IPR method will possibly continue the processing phase on into the future. Similar to trusting the process that the participants spoke of, I also embraced this concept as well throughout this study.

Addressing Bias

Being aware of my own bias as the researcher of this project who has completed both of the EAFT courses, I went into the analysis portion of this study mindful of a few things. Thematic analyses generally requires more immersion and interpretation on the part of the researcher than other methods, as it is about uncovering meaning and defining themes. Given that this type of analysis focused on classifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas I was cognizant to allow the participants the freedom to express their experiences without my input during the first half of the interviews where we viewed the video recorded talk therapy sessions together. During the second half of the interview, the conversation was more collaborative, yet I still allowed them to take

the lead in answering the questions.

Along with the above-mentioned safeguards, I also utilized member checking and journaling throughout the interviews in order to manage my own assumptions and biases, given my own personal experiences with this work. Instead of the traditional format of member checking, I tweaked the method a bit which I felt was a better fit for my study given the collaborative space created during the interview process. As the interviews unfolded, similar to my style of therapy, I often would reflect back what I was hearing to validate and also clarify meaning to make sure I was interpreting their experiences in the “right way.” I would then journal immediately after each interview; here are a few excerpts of my thoughts:

- The idea of “trusting the process”; not saying too much to influence them with my own bias during the interviews.
- Making the conscious decision of not commenting while actually watching the video recorded talk therapy session in order to get the full experience from the participants without manipulating the conversation. Didn’t want to “put words in their mouth.”
- I decided to wait until after the participants answered each semi-structured interview question to add my comments which then created a back and forth dialogue in many cases.
- Some of the participants expressed wanting to watch the tape for longer to “get good questions in,” maybe have them review what section they want to do first instead of having them start wherever they want randomly. However, self of the therapist should be something that is constant throughout session right?

Summary

The results were consistent across and between both data sets. As I began to code the data sets, I realized stark similarities. The participants' free associated thoughts through the IPR review and reflections during the semi-structured interview highlighted that there were similar themes across both sets of data. Furthermore, during the cross case analysis all five participants' responses supported the theory that there is transference into traditional talk therapy sessions from EAFT coursework. It also suggested the profound impact that EAFT coursework has on the self of the therapist development and participants were able to provide specific experiences that reinforced this. Through the use of IPR I was able to understand the meaning that the participants attributed to their experiences and allowed them to be the expert whom I could learn from.

CHAPTER V: IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this research study was to explore how MFT student therapists use the EAFT courses in traditional therapy sessions. This study sought to explore two questions: If the learning that occurs in the EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions and specifically how, within the use of self of the therapist. The data showed that through trusting the process and utilization, participants were able to share insightful and profound experiences that reflected on their self of the therapist development in the EAFT courses, which were applied in a traditional talk therapy session. The findings of this study supported my research questions and provided a rich context in answering these questions.

Discussion

The analysis of the transcribed data sets highlighted that EAFT courses and self of the therapist development were interconnected. Furthermore, the data emphasized that this phenomenon was translated back into a traditional talk therapy sessions and specifically how through a recursive process. The participants offered reflective insights into their own experiences, which had a stark similarity across all five interviews which was reflected in both data sets. Given that the two distinct interviews were conducted on the same day, during the continuous 90-minute interview session, it is possible this could account for some of the resemblance of the responses across both data sets. Family therapists are trained to view the world in terms of patterns, so this interpretation would fit for this population of participants. There was so much rich content to process, I wish I could have used it all in this manuscript, however, for the purpose of this study I used the excerpts I found to be most concise.

Through trusting the process and utilization, participants exemplified how they were able to make connections between the EAFT coursework, and the reflective influences it had on them, which they were able to carry over into traditional talk therapy sessions. Something else I noticed through this process was that none of the participants were critical of themselves. As students, watching their tapes can be a vulnerable moment of reflection; often students dread this process. Perhaps it was the frame in which the conversations were structured around and that idea of “no right or wrong way” which seems to have left a lasting mark and falls under the theme of trusting the process. When I was analyzing the data and realized that all of the feedback as well as reflections on their own work were positive, it made me think back to how the EAFT courses shift struggles or weaknesses into strengths and normalize each participant’s experiences. In turn, this allowed the participants the freedom to release societal constructs of what therapy should be or what they should be doing and allowed them to utilize their authentic selves and experiences as something to enhance the therapeutic process rather than hinder it. This study demonstrated how EAFT is a multipurpose process that can be used for clients to experience an unconventional form of therapy and also a vessel for therapists to gain invaluable insight into their own self of the therapist development. As stated earlier in the manuscript, systemic postmodern orientations are used to inform the EAFT courses. As evidenced through the data provided from the experiences of the participants and themes uncovered, various strength-based models such as solution focused, narrative, and collaborative were highlighted.

Limitations of the Study

While this study was successful in providing abundant answers to the research

questions proposed, it is not without limitations. These limitations should be considered for future research around the topic of inquiry.

In regards to participants, not all students who wanted to participate met the criteria for the video recorded talk therapist session as clients are given the option to record their sessions, therefore, many students did not have a video recorded talk therapy session which occurred after they completed both EAFT courses. Additionally, no Masters students participated in this study, partly due to not having video recorded sessions, but also relating to the fact that Masters students are only required to complete two semesters in BTI and reported that they took the Advanced EAFT course after they had already completed their practicum requirement consequently meaning they did not and could not see any more clients in BTI. In contrast, doctoral students require four practicums in BTI and then also, usually, see clients independently in the clinic once the requirement is met. However, this issue was not exclusive to Masters students as some Doctoral students as well who inquired about the study, reported that they did not have video recorded talk therapy sessions after having completed the Advanced EAFT course.

Bias may also be a cause for limitations, both on the side of the participants and myself as the researcher. In regards to participants, bias could be said to be prevalent as both EAFT courses are electives and not a requirement. Furthermore, the majority of the participants were still currently active at the time of the interviews with the associated organization, Stable Place Inc., where the second half of the hybrid EAFT coursework is facilitated. There was also not a single negative connotation noted during any part of the interview process. Researcher bias may also be another limitation given my close relationship and interest to the work of EAFT. Given that I was the sole researcher and I

conducted the interviews, manifested the questions, transcribed the data, coded and defined themes. With that, there is a possibility of influence on the participants and the results. As previously discussed, I was aware of this probability from the beginning of this study and took measures to minimize this by member checking and journaling. I also made the conscious decision to not comment during Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review and rather allow the participant to free associate their thoughts and create their own meaning with no influence from myself. I concluded that my Semi-Structured Interview questions during part two had enough of my influence ingrained in them and also decided that would be the proper space to have a collaborative conversation on the IPR review.

Implications for Future Research

Given that this is the first study of its kind and only one other study around the topic of EAFT coursework has been conducted, there is much room for further inquiry. Given that the courses are smaller in size and more intimate in nature compared to a conventional course, both have benefits and disadvantages in terms of participants.

Some areas of interest that could stem from this particular study would be a possible longitudinal study that followed students from the Introduction course and after the Advanced course to see if and what changes occurred for their process. Along this line, another study could compare and contrast the experiences of students in Introduction course and students in the Advanced course. Furthermore, an inquiry on comparing Self of the Therapist development for students who had taken both EAFT courses and students who did not.

In terms of the traditional talk therapy session from which the IPR review began,

it would be interesting to explore different amounts of time from when the course was completed to when the session took place. Furthermore, the amount of time taken in-between both courses can also serve as a point of interest and level of experience in the field.

Additionally, a study on Masters level MFT students and Doctoral MFT students who have taken both courses could serve as a platform of interest as there is certain to be a difference in developmental level, experience, and ideas on self of the therapist. However, this also leads me to bring up the topic of diversity and inclusion as my study did not take into account a focus on gender, age, race, or culture but more of a general understanding of the phenomenon. Such an inquiry could offer rich context for further understanding of this phenomenon as it did come up during my interviews to some extent. Age also relates to developmental level as well as life and clinical experience in the field, which in turn can shift the way self of the therapist development is encountered. Gender is another aspect that could be of interest as there generally are more people who identify as women in the MFT program; however, there were both male and female participants in this study. Another aspect to consider is if a participant has prior horse experience, which can impact how they relate to this experience. The EAFT courses do not teach horsemanship skills, and as stated previously, activities do not require a “right or wrong”. Many would view having experiences with horses prior to being in the courses as an advantage; however, as highlighted in this manuscript, this is a radically different way of being and interacting with horses. On the other hand, there have also been students who have taken these courses who had never been around horses and admittedly were afraid of them, and relate that back to the intimidation and fear of seeing

a client for the first time.

Summary

This study illuminated that Self of The Therapist Development is a significant process for students who take the EAFT courses and emphasized how they brought it into a traditional talk therapy sessions. The results demonstrated the impact it has on MFT student therapist's ability to not only function as therapists in a traditional talk therapy session but how they use themselves in it. Furthermore, how what they learned in the EAFT coursework is relevant and transferable to common practice as they were allowed the freedom to utilize themselves.

The use of horses throughout the centuries was noted earlier in this manuscript. However, the use of horses for this purpose is the first of its kind and evidenced that they still have much to teach us. As one of the participants noted:

. . . those horses I see that they are, they have become in my life, like a mentor. . . like if I had a professor that was quiet that never said anything but taught me the biggest lessons I could learn.

This speaks to the truly metamorphic nature of the EAFT work and the profound impacts it can have on self of the therapist development into traditional talk therapy sessions.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

To:

Re: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research Study

Hello,

I hope all is well. I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study. The study seeks to explore if and how the learning that occurs within the EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions. More specifically, the study will explore how students utilized the experiential process of learning within the courses to further their understanding and use of the self of the therapist in tradition talk therapy sessions.

Attached, as well as below, you will find the flyer with further details about the study. If you are interested in participating, please respond advising your willingness to participate so we may schedule a time for the interview at your earliest convenience. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Tiffany de León, PhD(c), LMFT

Td549@mynsu.nova.edu

305-733-6026

Research Participants Needed

Study Title: From Horse Walk To Therapy Talk: Exploring the Effects of Equine Assisted Family Therapy Coursework on Self of the Therapist Development of MFT Student Therapists

This study seeks to explore if and how the learning that occurs within the EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions. More specifically, the study will explore how students utilized the experiential process of learning within the courses to further their understanding and use of the self of the therapist in tradition talk therapy sessions. If you are currently active (enrolled and local) in the Masters, PhD, or DMFT Marriage and Family Therapy program at NSU and have successfully completed both the Introduction and Advanced Equine Assisted Family Therapy courses, you are eligible to participate in this study.

Eligible participants will be asked to view, along with the researcher, a 15-minute segment of their most recent video recorded talk therapy session that occurred in the Brief Therapy Institutes Family Therapy Clinic. The video recorded talk therapy session must have signed permission from the client for educational use and have occurred after successful completion of both EAFT courses. Participants will watch the segment with the researcher and then participate in a one-time audio-recorded interview, which will occur at the Brief Therapy Institutes Family Therapy Clinic at NSU. The entire process will last no more than 90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. There is no compensation for participating in this study.

If you would like to participate in this study, please e-mail Tiffany de León, M.S., LMFT at td549@mynsu.nova.edu or call/text 305-733-6026

Appendix B

General Informed Consent Form NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled

From Horse Walk To Therapy Talk: Exploring the Effects of Equine Assisted Family Therapy Coursework on Self of the Therapist Development of MFT Student Therapists

Who is doing this research study?

College: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and Department of Family Therapy

Principal Investigator: Tiffany de Leon, M.S.

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Shelley Green, Ph.D.

Co-Investigator(s): N/A

Site Information: Nova Southeastern University, Brief Therapy Institute, 3301 College Ave, Maxwell Maltz Building, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314

Funding: Unfunded

What is this study about?

The study seeks to explore if and how the learning that occurs within the EAFT courses transfers into traditional talk therapy sessions. More specifically, the study will explore how students utilized the experiential process of learning within the courses to further their understanding and use of the self of the therapist in tradition talk therapy sessions.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because you are currently active (enrolled and local) in the Masters, PhD, or DMFT Marriage and Family Therapy program at NSU and have successfully completed both the Introduction and Advanced Equine Assisted Family Therapy courses.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

You will be asked to view, along with the researcher, a 15-minute segment of your most recent video recorded talk therapy session in the Brief Therapy Institutes Family Therapy Clinic. The video recorded talk therapy session must have signed permission from the client for educational use and have occurred after successful completion of both EAFT courses. The process will consist of stopping and/or rewinding the recording whenever the participant or researcher feels it is a relevant moment to discuss. You will then participate in a one-time interview, the entire process will last for no longer then 90 minutes.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

This research study involves minimal risk to you. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would have in everyday life.

If you have any questions about the research or your research rights, please contact Tiffany de Leon, M.S., or Shelley Green, Ph.D. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions related to your research rights.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You have the right to leave this research study at any time or refuse to be in it. If you decide to leave or you do not want to be in the study anymore, there will be no penalty. If you choose to stop being in the study before it is over, any information about you that was collected **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the end of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form, if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits from being in this research study. We hope the information learned from this study will enhance how university programs. We hope the information learned from this study will enhance self of the therapist development and teach us about how the EAFT courses transfer into traditional talk therapy sessions.

Will I be paid or given compensation for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

You will not be given any payments or compensation for participating in this research study.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled in a confidential manner, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. The review of video recordings and interviews will be done in a private room in the Brief Therapy Institute. This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any regulatory and granting agencies (if applicable). If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data, such as this

informed consent, will be kept securely in an electronic format, in a password protected folder within a password protected computer which has a security system and firewall protection. All data will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study and destroyed after that time by shredding of any paper materials and digitally erasing all electronic files.

Is there any Audio or Video recording?

This research study involves audio recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any of the people who gave the researcher money to do the study (if applicable). The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Tiffany de Leon, M.S. can be reached at (305) 733-6026

If primary is not available, contact:

Shelley Green, Ph.D. can be reached at (954) 262-3028

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

Nova Southeastern University

(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790

IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

All space below was intentionally left blank.

Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research.

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person
Obtaining Consent and
Authorization

Signature of Person Obtaining
Consent & Authorization

Date

Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do you define self of the therapist?
2. What stood out to you, if anything, after watching the video that you can relate back to your use of self of the therapist?
3. What, if any EAFT activities transformed your experience in traditional talk therapy sessions?
4. What was it about the moment in the video recording that is compelling or significant?
5. What it is that happened for you that ties back to the time with the horses?
6. What do you think you did differently in this clip that you would not have done prior to taking the EAFT courses?
7. What kind of changes, if any, did you notice in yourself during this traditional talk therapy sessions after completing both EAFT courses?
8. In what ways does the portion of the video recorded talk therapy session relate to your use of self of the therapist?
9. How do you think the EAFT courses influenced your self of the therapist development, if they did?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss that we did not cover?

Appendix D

Thematic Analysis

Interview Part One: Video Recorded Talk Therapy IPR Review

Participant	Coding	Theme	Excerpt
P1	Body language Empathy Matching/mirroring Trust Comfortable Equine	Self of the therapist Utilization Trust the process Empathic statements EAFT coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before this, I would typically like pick at my nails... • That's something that made me connect to that self of the therapist piece cause that was one of those things I recognized so much when I was in the classes um doing equine... • I was not feeling like I needed to fill the silence um which is something that I definitely did not feel as comfortable with probably prior to doing so much self of the therapist work... • With those comments I've made it makes think a lot of that too those empathic statements... • That's another thing that mirroring process you know kind of picking up where their at • There's no

			<p>pressure or stress on my part of having to question or am I doing this right or am I not doing this right rather just sit here with this client and trust...</p>
P2	<p>Trust</p> <p>Comfortable</p> <p>Matching</p> <p>Metaphor</p> <p>Equine</p>	<p>Utilization</p> <p>Trust the process</p> <p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Use of symbolism</p> <p>EAFI Coursework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am always so open to this I love people brining other things into the room and kind of like equine we literally bring ourselves out of the room to get to those other things... • I found that that's a big part of my work and is remembering those little tiny things that you can utilize at different moments that you can help elicit certain strengths and help challenge a client and bring it up just to be curious for me that utilization is so important... • kind of getting closer and then I'm leaning into too to match [client]. • back in the day I might have engaged and had to give him an answer or my

			<p>opinion but now days being more comfortable in silence...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that's one of my biggest things out at equine would be just letting things unfold and not really worry about having to hit every point or coming up with some elaborate plan... • one of them is metaphor as I said [client] is interested in metaphor and I love that cause that is such a part of our work out at the barn and any chance I can do that in the room too I know that works for me and I know I can run with it and if I have a client where that matches really well we can have some great dialogue...
P3	<p>Body language</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Barn</p>	<p>Utilization</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Trust the Process</p> <p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>EAFT coursework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as you know at the barn that is a huge part of what we do is paying attention to not only verbal language but also body language not only of the client but the horse as well... • ...a traumatic

			<p>event so [client] was moved here for safety reasons. Um so again I think that being in that new environment and the barn is a different environment, you also have to pay attention to things that are going on...I think the barn and horses teach that, to pay attention to multiple things at once.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a lot of it really was the environment and how each person was acting so um really having conversations about how those behaviors influence what else is going to happen or what comes next or what the person is thinking and how they react to them um and I think that's a skill I definitely that I definitely got much better at recognizing uh for myself during my training out at equine• ...I think a lot of work that I had done at the barn um exercise wise helps show the process and how people process
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			<p>situations or how they approach them and how they lay them out and um through them doing particular activities or specific things um they are able to see uh you know and as a therapist or somebody who is helping them there is alright like you used a very good skill to get through this obstacle course or activity and you know we talk about it and continue to reinforce from that activity so they can continue to use it in other places...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can see some relation there in reference to me asking if they recognize behaviors um that the other individual was doing.
P4	Adapt Barn	Utilization Self of the Therapist EAFT coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that our work at the barn has definitely, like sometimes I kind of see it like peek its head in my sessions...weather I realize it in the moment or not. • I think its interesting how

			<p>whatever we are studying like whatever you're in the middle of really kind of informs your practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...so just thinking about how the class has affected my practice now...
P5	<p>Fluidity</p> <p>Horses</p>	<p>Utilization</p> <p>Self of the Therapist</p> <p>EAFT coursework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was a lot of flexibility and I think that that was one of the biggest things • she was just like the horses you know no I'm not going to move I'm not going to you know let you do what you're pretending to do that's not my intention that's something that I got from, for me as a therapist that I learned from the horses... • that's one of the things that happened in after I took the horse courses... nobody wanted to take the case because they were concerned about her mental state...(but she did).

Appendix E

Cross Case Thematic Analysis

Interview Part Two: Semi-Structured Interview

Participant 1

Semi-structured Interview Question	Code	Theme	Excerpt
1	Define SOTT	Reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...a self reflective process where you look into your strengths as well as your limitations um your life experiences and through that reflection, self reflective process you're learning more about yourself...
2	Use of SOTT	Trust the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...through my self of the therapist work I've learned a lot on how to be ok with trusting that process umm being able to be comfortable with silence, not to rush, um not to have feel like I need to have an objective or some sort of agenda in place in order to be successful...
3	EAFT activities	Learning about self Mindfulness Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...every time I interacted with the horses I felt that um I learned something about myself um I would say that the one to relate most to what we've been talking about today would probably be um those activities such as um, listening to the heart beat because... ...all of the work that I've done in self of the therapist that's something I definitely think I've been able to quite my mind and slow myself down um and so those where you have to do that with the horses you

			<p>have to slow down you have to kind of just be there, have been so helpful in my development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific activities w/ theme of silencing the mind: • listening to the heart beat • blindfold
4	Significance	Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't think if I had so much of self of the therapist practice and experience say through the classes I would be able to be at that position where I'm not confounded by that model but I can just use it to inform me and so each time I've stopped [the video recorded talk therapy session] that's kind of been my thought process...
5	Horse connection	Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...a particular um task in mind within that activity but just that partnership with the horses and how you've developed that, I'm seeing that so much so in my interactions with my clients how I've built that partnership throughout our relationship...
6	Difference	<p>Mindfulness</p> <p>Utilization</p> <p>Self of the therapist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...being able to just stay and track what the client is saying in that moment rather than having your mind head off to 10 different questions or 10 different ways you want to go where with that client is now um is definitely something um I wouldn't have wouldn't have been possible for me to do if I hadn't of taken the equine classes... • ...in the classes that's what you're doing is you're straying in the moment with the horse, they are

			always going to stay in the moment and so I always learned so much from those experiences that allowed me to then translate that into the room...
7	Change	Utilization Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...utilize what they are providing me in that moment as information to inform my next question um rather than having that list of things I had to check off like those boxes, so that's like the main thing I would probably say is what I noticed in all of my therapy sessions after the classes.
8	SOTT in the room	Self of the therapist Reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...now being able to see it again, I'm able to reflect on you know what were those skills that I used that were helpful in this situation, what did I learn about myself um in relation to how I conducted therapy...
9	EAFT course influence	Self of the Therapist Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think they influenced a lot of development as a therapist um so much so that at times especially in the doctoral program when I was in practicum I would sometimes feel like I didn't know how to therapy in the room without a horse... ...once I abandoned that idea that they [EAFT sessions and traditional talk therapy sessions] were separate I was able to then really um bring the 2 ideas together and then I saw growth in my ability to utilize um be flexible um have that purposeful observation as we've mentioned before um to be able to match my clients better provide those empathic statements...

10	More info	No further info	n/a
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Participant 2

Semi-structured Interview Question	Code	Theme	Excerpt
1	Define SOTT	Utilization Self of the Therapist EAFT course Tangible experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And so for me self of the therapist is really just learning about yourself and knowing what you bring into the room as a therapist knowing what your strengths are knowing the things that might trip you up and being as best prepared for those things as you can be and also not being afraid to utilize those strengths and utilize those things you're good at. • ... I always remember I talk about class and going through equine classes and to me I learned more about myself as an individual and as a clinician in those classes then any other classes that I had taken so there's something about that putting it into action in the doing sense, the experiencing sense that really allowed you to self reflect in a different way...
2	Use of SOTT	Matching/mirroring Body language Intentionality Trust the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I leaned in like very intently like wow this is something important so I want to show you that in another way rather than just say it verbally. • I think the better you know yourself the more comfortable you can be in that uncertainty because I mean to us that's what therapy is weather its out at the barn or in here its all uncertainty we don't know

			<p>what's going to come next in the conversation and so rather than being prepared for what's next in the conversation it might be better to be prepared knowing who you are and what you bring to the table.</p>
3	EAPT Activities	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Tangible experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I see much of that now I can navigate those situations and still be nice and I won't get away from that but I also don't need to be untrue to myself and feel like I'm being too nice or I have to take a moment where I'm not being nice. • ...it showed me that I could be confident after putting in the work and eventually getting to a place where I could say hey I could do this • ...part of that is probably because I have a visual from it a really good picture so it reminds me of it, and leaves me with a good feeling I guess reflecting back on it... • Specific activities w/ theme of confidence building and self acceptance: • Tire exercise • Labeling
4	Significance	<p>Interaction</p> <p>Connection</p> <p>Utilization</p> <p>Trust the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...when we interacting in a particular way it brought me to a moment where I wanted to reflect on that moment so for me it was maybe the process level of things I feel like when we are interacting and getting into more of that kind of dialogue we are at the process level... • ...I'm waiting to pick up on things that I can utilize and what not but then we have

			that moment of interaction or something is happening that's where it brings us to that process level...
5	Horse connection	Trust Joining Collaboration Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...for me it was part of our work together were we were able to come to a place just like this where working with the horses you don't walk out to the paddock or into their stall and their space and immediately create trust there's a relationship that's formed there's a rapport that's built and eventually trust can come through that depending on how you navigate those waters... • ...you need that time and those interactions to build that trust it doesn't just come out of nowhere and it comes from both of you, you kind of each play a part in that but you need to know what you're bringing to the table in those moments to help build that and also be open and honest about those things especially with horses and here I think that open an honesty maybe might be better termed umm just being genuine, I think when you're in the room and you're genuine clients pick up on that... • I think some of that I still remember when go into the room or its at least subconsciously there with me you know that our clients, not much different then horses will pick up on things you know in the situation so just being able to bring that authentic self that genuine self I at least

			for me that's going to be most beneficial not just because I t will be comfortable in the room but it will be comfortable for me.
6	Difference	Utilization Trust the process Self of the Therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...utilizing everything that's brought into the room I maybe would have been a little more apprehensive or tentative to engage in... • ...just a matter of being flexible and being open to that process where here I think its the same thing I'm open to whatever or whoever he wants to bring into the room and whichever way we want to go and I'm comfortable knowing I can navigate any of those situations no matter what it is that comes in and I think that the barn helped with that because it gave us a lot of examples of things we kind of didn't think would come up come up and then you have a chance to respond to those and see how you would handle that.
7	Change	Comfortably Confidence in self Self of the therapist Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm so comfortable in the room now and I think that certainly was a big product of learning and practicing being comfortable a lot at the barn because there are a lot of moments if maybe more moments out at the barn where there's uncertainty... • I became more comfortable I guess in going back into the room saying not all of that space needs to be filled we can you know be quite in

			<p>moments in the room, we can still utilize stuff that's eve in the room just like we would utilize stuff out at the barn.</p>
8	SOTT in the room	Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think its just another example of me going into the room and being me, I'm comfortable... • ...just knowing myself so for me just shows me that I am comfortable with myself as a therapist in you know whichever situation it might be in and so for me it was just another example of that.
9	EAFT course influence	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Tangible experience</p> <p>Reflective</p> <p>In the moment</p> <p>Meaning making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we were out there doing stuff where we could look through ourselves with the lens of a therapist and relate this back to our work in the room that was so powerful for me because like I was saying before I learned a lot about myself which translated really well to who I am as a therapist and a clinician... • ...there were multiple layers it was reflecting on your self as a therapist in the moment, out in the activity it was reflecting on yourself as a therapist in the class the following week looking back on something in the past it was reflecting on yourself as a therapist... • its also very in the moment so you can get the feedback right then and there and granted you can in practicum sometimes too but not always, sometimes its after the session so you're working on something and then you're not able to reflect

			<p>on it or even with your peers until after its already happened where we might be able to a time out during the equine work and reflect on it right in the moment or you might get a question asked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it's a unique opportunity to be able to tap into self of the therapist stuff in the moment get immediate feedback • they really give you a really raw way to look at yourself and reflect on yourself and create meaning too I think that's another thing in this sort of work with self of the therapist you are able to create that meaning yourself. • I like this work where it allows you to ascribe that to yourself its something you're doing you're not just thinking about it you're actually doing it.
10	More info	Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...this has always been one of the highlights for me in terms of the program and my work here just equine in general and I think it helped me learn a lot about myself an also tap into myself my strengths my weaknesses and everything in between...

Participant 3

Semi-structured Interview Question	Code	Theme	Excerpt
1	Define SOTT	Beliefs Values Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...really being in tune with ugh like who you are in the sense of your beliefs your values um and understanding how those influence things around you um and how you perceive things um and the reason I say that is because um without truly knowing yourself or how you react um or what you think about different situations you enable yourself to kind of um knowingly give bias to things around you...
2	Use of SOTT	Use of own experiences Knowing limits Self of the therapist Biases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I saw myself in both people just because I was also the [client 1] in certain ways but I've grown kind of into that [client 2] role because I understand, I have a lot more wisdom in life to what to what you know things that could get you forward in life and things that could not um what also made me a very valuable asset in that room... I also again just had to take a step back I just told you...
3	EAFT activities	No right or wrong way Many paths lead to same outcome Language Transfer to in room sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...you know everybody will compete the [obstacle] course to a certain extent weather they thought it was the way they wanted to or not but that idea of you know your end goal or your end destination never ends up being like what you expected it to be like usually... ...maybe put a little less of personal emotion into what you're asking for them it

			<p>can become more clear to the person who actually needs to act or change or do something different. So I would say that that ugh opened my eyes a lot more in the room to really start breaking particular things down into very small pieces so people can build on ugh those skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific EAFT activities w/ theme of no right or wrong way & trust: • Obstacle course • Saddle Up
4	Significance	EAFT influence Observation Interpretation Utilization Small steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it's like subconscious that I could start something from point A and go exactly 15 minutes from the start of any random sessions and see so much of how ugh equine has influenced the way I maybe process... • ...you now this conversation is in 4 walls in a rooms where I have the entire world kind of at the barn and so much to pull from so I really have to focus and listen and not take things for face value and really see what information I can use and how I can help break those smaller pieces down and make them easier to understand and accomplish ugh in the room...
5	Horse connection	In the moment Trust the process Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I decided to just wait and let [client] process what they are feeling, talk about it a little more and then just pick up on some of the things that [client] had mentioned um which really remind me of my time with the horses of really just being in the

			moment and you know if I ask a question just let it resonate and be there and just not feel the need to respond or say anything to is just see what happens.
6	Difference	EAFT course Small change leads to big change Energy transference Being in the moment Observation Slowing down Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...without my experience with equine I don't know if I would have, I mean yeah I know that behaviors are linked to particular things but like the clarity and how clear it was that um your approach to anything that you do is so significant um and the slightest change in that can be the biggest difference um you know as you know with horses being pray animals and having the ability to feel and hear vibrations from you know like two and a half miles away I always tell clients like imagine the energy you are bringing... • Um so I think that I handle situations a lot more delicately then like down playing them or saying its not that serious like you just need to change this. I'm like no I pay attention, like what was your experience with that you know what were your thoughts at that time you know how did that reflect into how you replied.
7	Change	Personal growth Self of the therapist EAFT course Comfortable Slow down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw growth, um for me big time, just so much more awareness um you know I was always a person who was comfortable in doing therapy it was never like to nerve wracking for me to do but for me especially doing stuff you know like

		<p>Trust the process</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>self of the therapist and my abilities and things that I'm able to do in the room I see so much growth because of experience with equine um I see a lot of like peace of mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some people feel ugh the need to maybe do something that's maybe not authentic to themselves and try to figure things out and come out naturally um and I think its more meaningful to the therapeutic process to the client because it comes off as genuine um and how comfortable you know I can be there and a lot of that does come from you know my experience at the barn and just you really just need to be comfortable in that space • I really feel like that work made me take a step back and really as we just talked about um observe...
8	SOTT in the room	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Awareness</p> <p>Utilization</p> <p>In the moment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I think it really just keeps me in tune with my beliefs around what the self of the therapist is and I think you know that I was able to see myself really trying to remove myself from something that I could have been maybe like emotionally attached to the could have influenced or caused bias in the room but I was able to kind of take a step back and really asses the situation for what it was and help [the clients]... • ...I'm really utilizing the things that I am learning and not overlooking them um and again its just going to continue to help me

			<p>grow to keep these things in mind and always be conscious I think that's something that I always have to do at the barn is always 100% be conscious of everything that's going on because that's exactly what those animals are doing they are out there so I kind of embody that in my own personal way in the room so.</p>
9	EFT courses influence	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Biases</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Leading from behind</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it definitely reinforced all of those rules that I learned ethically because its like so much application um and you really do have to do it at the barn and its just like you cant you know as self of the therapist I cant just out my biases or just do what I think is best because its not about what I think its you know every therapist has their own stance... • ...you know so its you're the expert in your own life and so you know best on how or what's going to work and you know its just my job to based on the information that you give and what your looking for to just guide you towards that in whichever way we can work to do that um and if that's what that solution is to them then you now I'm happy to offer that because I didn't do anything unjust by doing what I thought was best you know it was more so from them so I really just think it helped reinforce that for me...
10	More information	Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I found this useful ugh to again kind of just talk

		Growth Validating	about kind of what I'm doing um again we just picked a random tape and popped it in saw what happened kind of thing so um its nice to see that its not fabricated, for me um its so natural that I don't even realize its happening and I think that that's just really going to help my work um grow even more and what not.
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Participant 4

Semi-structured Interview Question	Code	Theme	Excerpt
1	Define SOTT	Self of the therapist Reflective Family of origin Values/beliefs Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...a self-reflective process to kind of look inward at who you are as a person that will you know affect who you are as a therapist so things like your values, yours biases, your culture, you history, your family um all those things that kind of make you who you are and um examining those and being aware of those.
2	Use of SOTT	Slow process Trust the process Self of the therapist Observation Utilization EAFT courses Connecting Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that I tend to go slow sometimes in therapy because...I really am trying to understand where my clients coming from because just like the type of person that I am kind of how my mind works, I feel like in order for me to you know facilitate a conversation that can lead to any kind of shift I really need to like understand my client and their thinking, their thought process and so I listen a lot... I was actually uncomfortable you know kind of connecting with the horse. Um and so I was able to identify that as a potential weakness because as a therapist, how am I supposed to conduct therapy if I'm not willing to connect with the person. Um so that was kind of a big shift for me in the class, and I cant remember when it happened but it was probably at about the half way mark and so that's

			<p>when I kind of started focusing in the activities of connecting with the horse...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • and to try to go with the pace that the client sets...
3	EAFT activities	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Reflective</p> <p>Leaning in</p> <p>Awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I wasn't ready to experience someone else having that type of emotion...um... so that just like stand out as you know as information for me that some of this still really made me uncomfortable... • I remember that when I did the activity, I got teary eyed a little but I had sunglasses on so I wasn't really going to let anyone in on how it was meaningful to me...um.. and so kind of doing my own self other therapist work in that class a lot that really inspired me to be reflective and think about that and again how that's going to be a limitation in my own therapy if I'm you know hesitant in these kind of ways um... so I think kind of over time...I've learned to kind of lean in a little bit more and not so...um.. distant and kind of closed off. • Specific EAFT activities w/ theme of facing your fears: • moving the hips
4	Significant	Nothing compelling or significant to report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I didn't think it was a significant moment or like...
5	Horse connection	<p>Patience</p> <p>Trust the process</p> <p>Slow down</p> <p>Observation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...learning patience like I saw when I first went in I was very, get in it get the job done get out... • ...I think in the past probably before the equine class I would have gotten

			frustrated and maybe tried to...jump in or redirect the conversation um...but here I think I was just kind of patient with her and was giving her time and space and waiting to see ok is this going to connect to something else...
6	Difference	Trust the process No right or wrong way Self of the Therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...not trying to wrap it up in a bow... • ...I feel a lot less pressure not to make something happen in the room...umm and I think that has had a lot to do with learning to trust the process and yeah, trusting that eventually um... because you know its not about what's meaningful for me and like oh obviously I'm seeing this connecting point but um you know its about how its meaningful for [client] so.
7	Change	Connecting Joining Being in the moment Self of the therapist EAFT courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...that I was so closed off to kind of I'm assuming that it would of translated to me being really closed off with the client um... and so now like a big part of my work is really just joining with them and being present in the moment with them. • I didn't know how to be in the moment I was always very future focused or maybe kind of um reflective about the past but...being in the moment I could not do...um...and so after taking the class and I realized you know that and also the fact that I wasn't willing to connect with the people or I guess I didn't really know how to do that really either... • ...I recognized those as

			<p>things that I was just recognize those aspects about myself much less had a medium for me to address them like work through them...that was all really through working with the horses and the class so I'm really grateful for that because I think those really would have made me a completely different therapist...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think I'm very present now and that's definitely all to the equine classes... I don't know how else I would have learned that, without that class...those courses.
8	SOTT in the room	<p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Comfortable</p> <p>Validating</p> <p>Trust the process</p> <p>Observation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...I think after doing self of the therapist work...I felt like I know myself and I'm pretty comfortable with who I am like inside and outside of the room so while I'm constantly interested in learning to become a better therapist to you know um I don't think I really judge myself that much... I'm kind of just more accepting of the process and kind of myself and where I'm at now and what I might be experimenting with or what I might be trying to do differently but I'd say yeah there's less pressure... ...doing whatever I'm doing in the moment whether it's you know joining or just listening attentively to what my client is going through and trying to add in the best way that I can but I think I'm much less of a self

			critic then I probably was before I took the courses...
9	EAFT course influence	<p>Tangible experience</p> <p>Self of the therapist</p> <p>Raw feedback</p> <p>In the moment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...kind of like we say at the barn...a lot of it happens in the session but a lot of it happens after at home after the sessions um...so just the experiences that I had there...even though in some cases I wasn't ready to process it with the group then I went home and did talk about it with you know family members or close friends...yeah and I think it was um...a mean I don't want to give a percentage but I was a core aspect of doing that work. • ...because it is so experiential it, it caused me to have sort of visceral reactions that it was I was unable to deny them... • I was really really good at before, of just kind of stuffing stuff down and maybe not acknowledging it, like you can't ignore it when the horse is giving you that direct feedback and its in your face
10	More info	<p>Reflective</p> <p>EAFT courses</p> <p>Self of the therapist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I mean I thought it was cool thinking and reflecting back on...I guess this conversation has made me think about it kind of in different ways or has helped me recognize themes um...because I always think and talk about like equine is so much a part of who I am now because we... the classes where so meaningful to me and then my internship and now that I work there um...I really value that experience in my life right

			now but...reflecting on it in this way has been cool.
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Participant 5

Semi-structured Interview Question	Code	Theme	Excerpt
1	Define SOTT	Self of the therapist Relationship Connection Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...it's a deep way of relating to someone when they are going to therapy so I think that you... are also um...as a therapist you become a separate person but at the same time you influence in them its not only um from you to them but from them to you and I think I gain a lot of who should I be. I grew up a lot in this relationship with this client umm because it made me it showed me a different area that I had never seen of a human being, just like with the horses.
2	Use of SOTT	Patience Listening Matching Pace Leading from behind Self of the therapist Trust the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was really patient I became a patient therapist... ...what was important to [client] so it was not the same thing as what was important to me so I learned a lot from the horses that when you have a client its not about you...doing your job its about them showing you what's important to them.
3	EAFT activities	Metaphor Confidence Self of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...that was my thing with the horses I didn't want my feet to be broken so then that's how I figured out that I was also using that

		therapist Growth Utilization	<p>metaphor with my relationship with her because it was...ok I shouldn't be seeing a client with such a disorder and I have no experience and I was just in my second practicum when she came in and so I was not working yet with regular clients I only had the BTI I wasn't a registered intern I wasn't even half way with my classes...you know what I'm saying it was a lot it was intimidating...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...she was the horse even to me! I realized that she became comfortable enough so the horse came and traveled all that 2-3 hour drive just to come to the session what did that [client] find, that somebody could listen to her. • ...I also use it in my practice the activities that we use like with the blindfolds with the kids, I do that with the kids following through with the parents like the head is the mother... • ...a lot of metaphors are very important for clients to see the relationship they have with others and with themselves... • Specific activities w/ theme of metaphor: • Blindfold
4	Significant	Leading from behind Listening Metaphor Trust the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...most of the time she couldn't understand what I was trying to say, not because of a language barrier but because it was um difficult for her to learn what you were trying to get her into... • ...it was the point where I

			felt that she was similar to the horses, that we don't get them that easy that we need to be able to let them show us into the session.
5	Horse connection	Tangible Experiential Self of the therapist Connection Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always like the fact that this is something that is out of the room and that you cannot bring it inside but the concepts you can and I think that's one of the biggest courses I have taken that have marked me as a therapist... • then I have 3 or 4 years old like "I don't know if I'm supposed to tell you this" and then they go and then he said to me "its because you learn to speak their language" but I think that's what made me learn to speak people's languages. is that I learned to speak horse. • Because when you learn how to relate to the horses in that sense as a therapist and it was such a great experience to my personal life that I think it modifies you...
6	Difference	Listening to clients Leading from behind EAFT courses Meet clients where they are Collaboration Self of the therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...the horse was like I'm going to do this, so that teaches lessons that you can't learn in the classroom the same way as it teaches you how to be, to move off the walls from where you're sitting with your clients because I think it opens a lot of space to learn that there's no way that you can meet someone where you want it.
7	Change	Perspective Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always wanted to be a psychologist and the changes that happened

		Utilization Trust the process	<p>from that time when I was 10 until I got into school made me think that it was going to be a little different but nothing, nothing like after I took equine, nothing I mean I am glad I had the opportunity because it definitely gave me another perspective of how to work in therapy and even when there is not words...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...you know there is things that I have learned from equine that allowed me to understand when the language it not verbal, and I think that's the main gain uh for me, that I learn how to understand something when there is no words to say it.
8	SOTT in the room	Trust the process Validation Mirroring Self of the therapist EAFT courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...that you're not doing anything wrong or right... • ...when you see a horse working with us and learning how to become part of that session you're doing with them, ugh it might be intimidating though to them that we are there, and they are not asking me how old I am...so umm I'm not asking them either. So age is not anything a factor... • I see myself from the horse those horses I see that they are they have become in my life, like a mentor...like if I had a professor that was quite that never said anything but taught me the biggest lessons I could learn... • Yes they are my mentor, in fact I put the min my clinical portfolio video and all that because to me its like made me the therapist

			I am...
9	EFT course influence	<p>Meeting the client where they are</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Validation</p> <p>Trust the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...that way they gave me security too, that ensured that I wanted to be a therapist, it didn't matter how, that's talent, its not uh a skill that you learn, it's a talent you're born with the ability to communicate that way and then when you come to terms with them, they make you evolve • Yes it validated me like I said its like a mentor, they were a mentor and showed me the direction to go... • So I think that's what I learned as a therapist to be able to acknowledge ok you don't want to move from there but you're going to let me paint on you, so I'll follow you...and I'm going to work from here.
10	More info	<p>Recommended for all therapists</p> <p>More opportunity for interaction after</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...I would recommend something for Nova is to try to um motivate therapists to take the class and to be able to participate more in the barn because I really wish I could do more with them.

Biographical Sketch

Tiffany de León was born and raised in Miami, Florida and holds a deep connection to her Cuban heritage. She attended Miami Dade College where she received her Associate in Arts Degree and then transferred to Florida International University where she became a research assistant for the Center for Children and Families and her passion for the field was born. After two years, she received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Minor in Art. She then pursued her graduate career at Nova Southeastern University and after two years, received her Master of Science Degree in Family Therapy. Tiffany decided to continue her evolution in the field and pursue her Ph.D. in Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University as well.

Tiffany worked as a graduate assistant at the Brief Therapy Institute (BTI) throughout her time in the Ph.D. program; she also worked as a graduate assistant and saw clients in the Medical Family Therapy (MedFT) clinic. Along with maintaining a caseload of clients in BTI and MedFT, Tiffany was involved in many diverse activities while pursuing her Ph.D., including: designing MFT club logos, being a member of DKO honor society, participating in writing and executing a grant for Single Session Therapy, working as a solution focused coach with early childhood educators, serving as the teaching assistant and supervisory assistant for various masters and doctoral level courses and practicums, various internships where she provided individual, couples, family, and group therapy in the Broward County Public school system, substance misuse facilities, and facilitating equine assisted family therapy and learning at Stable Place Inc. Furthermore, she has also published and presented at multiple national conferences.

Tiffany is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and AAMFT Approved

Supervisor. She is passionate about creating a safe space for clients and students to embrace their authentic selves and looks forward to what is next in her journey. In her free time, she can be found traveling, collecting fossils and gemstones, drawing, and manifesting creations inspired by nature; she is also an animal lover and proud feminist.