Notice of the Final Oral Examination for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BCYC (University of Victoria, 2015)

“Equine Therapies in North America: Exploring Themes in the Literature”

School of Child and Youth Care

Wednesday, December 16, 2020
12:00pm (PST)
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Sibylle Artz, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Nevin Harper, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Lori Kogan, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Colorado State University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Lynne Siemens, School of Public Administration, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The field of equine therapy (ET) in Canada and the USA encompasses a range of distinct approaches, such as equine-facilitated therapy, equine-assisted therapy, therapeutic riding, and hippotherapy. Due to issues like inconsistent terminology and lack of standardized practice manuals, there are gaps in the ET knowledge about how these approaches relate or differ from each other. This research reviewed 47 scholarly, peer-reviewed articles about ET approaches and applied thematic analysis to determine key themes that clarify key traits of each approach. Recognizing that children and youth are common participants in equine therapy, this research was motivated by the questions: What type of relational dynamics are modelled for children and youth in ET? How are these horse-human relationships portrayed? Which participants possess their own agency? Findings of this research provide insights about each approach of ET and highlight the therapeutic affects of interspecies relationships between humans and horses. Contradictory viewpoints about mutual agency between species are identified in language that described horses are active, intelligent subjects and/or passive, inanimate objects. This research provides insights about the different forms of ET, highlights important benefits and gaps, and invites the fields of Child and Youth Care and Animal-Assisted Therapy to critically reflect on the relational tensions of employing non-human animals in human therapy.

Keywords: equine therapy, thematic literature review, thematic analysis, children and youth, animal-assisted therapy, child and youth care, interspecies relationships, horse-human relationships, equine-facilitated therapy, equine-assisted therapy, therapeutic riding, hippotherapy, animal agency