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The aim of this research was to account for the meaning practitioners and clients gave to Guided Human Equine Interactions (GHEI). GHEI is a term that covers a range of interactions between human and horse for the purpose of facilitating emotional and social development in the human participants. There is paucity of research to evidence assumptions inherent in practice and little is known about the meaning participants give to GHEI. Despite this, practice is rapidly expanding in Britain following similar growth in America where GHEI originated.

An underlying premise in this thesis is that the discourses employed to account for equine involvement in therapy and learning will construct practice. Therefore, language samples were obtained from interviews with ten GHEI practitioners, two GHEI websites, and from the personal experience of one client through their diary entries. The data were interrogated, analysed and interpreted according to a discursive strategy based on work by Ballinger and Cheek (2006).

Five dominant discourses (metaphysical, sensory, social, mental distress and symbolic) were surfaced across three studies. These discourses served differing functions and woven together, formed a discursive framework that accounted for the meaning practitioners and clients gave to GHEI. This incorporated not only the cognitive, affective and behavioural elements seen in mental health interventions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), but also included the added dimensions of spiritual, sensory and symbolic meaning. These added factors provided for a more holistic experience for the client than office based therapy alone.

The insights gained suggest the horse has an impact, not only on the spatial distancing between the client and practitioner, but also on their relational distancing. This distancing enables the client to be positioned as the expert at the centre of the intervention. However, expert client positioning was only apparent as long as the practitioner did not draw on a dominant mental distress discourse, or tried to market GHEI. There was a lack of risk discourse across all studies, which was considered an important added factor in positioning the client as expert. Spatial and relational distancing may assist GHEI practitioners in being alongside individuals who decline to engage in more formal interventions.

It was noted that adaptation had taken place in the discursive construction of GHEI from practice developed in America. This had led to culturally relevant practice being accounted for in Britain.

It was concluded that the inclusion of a horse in therapeutic and learning practice is at an intersection between past discourses where the metaphysical, such as spirit and healing, were privileged and contemporary discourses where social care and treatment of mental illness are authoritative. There is a symbiotic relationship between the function of the horse in accounting for the meaning given to GHEI and the function of dominant discourses. This results in a centaur-like enmeshment of human and horse.
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I, Kim Brown declare that the thesis entitled ‘Horse for Discourses: the discursive construction of guided human equine interactions’, and the work presented in the document are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAT</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFT</td>
<td>Animal Facilitated Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHS</td>
<td>British Horse Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAA</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAEE</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Experiential Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAET</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Experiential Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAFT</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Family Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAGALA</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAT</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBE</td>
<td>Experts by Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Etain Equestrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFBi</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Brief Intensives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFC</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFHD</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Human Development</td>
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<td>EFL</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFP</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFHMA</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFPC</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Professional Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFT</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMHP</td>
<td>Equine Mental Health Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHEI</td>
<td>Guided Human Equine Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARHA</td>
<td>North American Riding for the Handicapped Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLP</td>
<td>Neuro Linguistic Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDA</td>
<td>Riding for the Disabled Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>Therapeutic Horsemanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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</table>
### GLOSSARY

**Animal Assisted Activities**
Any interactions aimed at facilitating human life enhancement outside of a goal orientated care planned treatment programme.

**Animal Assisted Therapy**
A treatment goal orientated interactions that involves animals and is part of a clinical therapeutic care planned treatment programme. Structured therapy follows a therapeutic assessment and is delivered by a suitably qualified therapist.

**Boundaries**
A way of working with clients and with horses that clearly shows when behaviour is acceptable and when it is not. Boundaries are the framework in which the client/professional or human/horse relationship occurs. They set the parameter in which services are delivered, or in which a relationship is experienced.

**Client**
The person that takes part in a guided human equine interactions. The term will vary according to the type of interactions, thus a client may be referred to as a patient in a therapeutic setting, a pupil or student in a school setting, or a participant in a corporate development setting. For ease of reference the term client is used throughout this thesis.

**Congruence**
Harmony and conformity in thought and action.

**Constructionism**
Constructed by larger groups as social agents (Burr 2008).

**Constructivism**
Constructed through the cognitive processes of an individual as a social agent (Gergen 2009).

**Discourses**
A discourse is a set of statements which constructs an object. Discourses do not simply describe the social world, they categorise it by bringing phenomenon into sight. A discourse is supported by conditions that include being realised in texts, about objects, containing subjects, a coherent system of meanings, referring to other discourses, reflecting on its own way of speaking, and being historically located (Parker 1992). The term ‘discourse’ tends to be used in linguistics whilst the plural ‘discourses’ is used in social psychology.

**Epistemology**
The study of how we know what we know.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equine</td>
<td>A general term that encompasses horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and miniature horses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Assisted Activities</td>
<td>A term that encompasses all activities that involve horses with guided assistance from a facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Assisted Family Therapy</td>
<td>Equine activities involving a family working with a qualified family therapist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated Coaching</td>
<td>Corporate development aimed at assisting employees to develop leadership and communication skills through interaction with equines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated Counselling</td>
<td>Equine activities involving a qualified counsellor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Equine activities that promote personal exploration of feelings and behaviour based on experiential learning theory. Also termed Equine Guided Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated Learning</td>
<td>Equine activities that promote personal growth and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated or Assisted Psychotherapy</td>
<td>Psychotherapy that includes equines. It involves a professionally qualified mental health specialist working alongside an appropriately qualified equine professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine Facilitated or Assisted Therapy</td>
<td>A therapeutic treatment programme that involves equines, a qualified mental health specialist, and a appropriately qualified equine professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethogram</td>
<td>A categorised inventory of the behaviour of an animal species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethology</td>
<td>The study of the observation and description of behaviour that leads to improved understanding of its mechanism, function, development, and evolution (McGreevy 2004 p. 353).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euphony</td>
<td>An inherent pleasantness in the sounds of certain words and sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Human Equine Interactions</td>
<td>Term employed within this thesis to cover all forms of interactions which involve a horse, outside of equestrian sports and riding, and which are aimed at human growth and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegemony</td>
<td>Denotes the predominance of one social class over others. This represents not only political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are subordinated by it accept it as common sense and natural (Chandler 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hermeneutics</td>
<td>The development and study of theories of the interpretation and understanding of texts which cultivates the ability to understand something from someone else’s point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippotherapy</td>
<td>A physical, occupational and speech therapy strategy that utilises equine movement. It is part of an integrated treatment programme aimed at achieving physical outcomes (American Hippotherapy Association 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Specialist</td>
<td>Term used to indicate the person handling the equine during a session and/or training and conditioning the equine for participation in equine assisted activities (NARHA EFMHA Glossary 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Interpretation of a social relationship that creates social meanings and has consequences (Powers 2007). Foucault (1995) argues against the term believing it implies a universal truth. He preferred the term ‘regimes of truth’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertextuality</td>
<td>Presence of actual elements of texts within a text (Fairclough 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isomorphism</td>
<td>Mapping relationships between two objects (Lawley and Tomkins (2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Study of the nature of reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantheism</td>
<td>God is All and All is God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet Therapy</td>
<td>Involvement of pets in therapeutic interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner</td>
<td>For the purposes of this study a practitioner was defined as an individual who was a horse specialist, a teacher or educationalist, complimentary therapist, a mental health specialist, social worker, occupational therapist, nurse, or an activity provider who had undergone a specific course of training in at least one form of guided human equine interaction, or they had more than two years experience of working in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosody</td>
<td>Rhythm stress and intonation of connect speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy</td>
<td>There are many different types of psychotherapy and therefore different definitions. It is generally taken as a form of therapy that draws on psychoanalytical theory to help people understand the roots of their emotional distress, often by exploring unconscious needs and defence mechanisms. Family therapy and psychodynamic therapy are two examples of psychotherapy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>A process which draws attention to the researcher in the research process. To make the researcher an object by referring to themselves. Rendering interpretative resources and processes public and available for evaluation (Potter 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Self</td>
<td>Everything in us that is unconscious, repressed, underdeveloped and denied. Confrontation with our shadow selves is considered important in psychological terms in developing awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy</td>
<td>A goal orientated intervention that is part of a clinical care planned treatment programme. Structured therapy follows a therapeutic assessment and is delivered by a suitably qualified therapist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trope</td>
<td>Figure of speech where words are used to change a meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional Positive Regard</td>
<td>The practitioner accepts the client totally without judgement or disapproval (Rogers 1961).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo Therapy</td>
<td>Programme of animal therapy involving zoo animals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My four supervisors for this thesis have never accepted anything less than my best efforts. I thank them from the bottom of my heart in getting me this far. The research could not have been completed without Dr Ellis Hill, who not only served as my rock and my main supervisor for the major part, but also encouraged and challenged me in equal measures. I was ably supported by Dr Kersten who, despite her wonderment at why anyone would want to be involved with horses, contributed her wealth of knowledge and expertise in soundly shaping the research. Without Dr Zeeman’s help and gentle support in understanding discourse analysis, I would never have processed the knowledge required to form the foundation of this work. She kept me on course. Finally Dr McBride, who brought with her laughter alongside her knowledge of animal behaviour, and I thank for contributing to the eggs, bacon and chips theory of discourse analysis. They have been my greatest mentors.

What a privilege it has been to make contact with all the participants in this research and hear their voices and stories. I trust I have given something back in the insights that surfaced through their contributions.

Whilst I may not be able to thank them all in person, each of the authors that influenced this research has made a lasting impression in helping me understand sometimes complex concepts through their writings. Claire Ballinger, Vivien Burr, Kenneth Gergen, and Ian Parker, and of course the indomitable Michel Foucault, who filled me with trepidation before I even began reading his works.

The inspiration for this research has been my horses who have accompanied me in life now for some years. I freely confess to being heart locked to horses. They have helped me through some of my toughest times and taught me patience, humility and spontaneity. They have given me wings to fly and without them in my life I have no centre. We are growing old quite disgracefully together.

Last, but by no means least as the old saying goes, my family. I am heart locked to you all too.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1 Background to the Research

The aim of this research is to provide an account of meaning given to the increasing involvement of horses in therapeutic and learning practice by asking how guided human equine interactions are discursively constructed. Framing of this statement will be explored in more depth as the thesis unfolds. Notwithstanding, the overarching principle grounding the research is that language does not consist merely of neutral expressions, it is constitutive of meaning which has implications for practice. The theoretical stances of authors influenced by Foucauldian thinking, include Burr (1995, 2008), Gergen (1985, 2009), Parker (1992, 1998, 1999), Parker et al (1995, 1999) and Ballinger and Cheek (2006) will be drawn on throughout the thesis.

There are a range of different practices that fall into the genre of human-horse interaction, with riding a horse the most obvious. However, this study is not about horse riding. This study is about structured interaction between client and horse/s that takes place on the ground in an enclosed arena or field, and involving a qualified professional. Clients are involved either individually or in a group. The stated purpose of these various human-horse interactions is for the client to achieve emotional growth and social development. Many different names are applied to the practice, such as Equine Assisted Therapy, Coaching, Psychotherapy, or Learning. Due to the wide range of possible labels, this study uses an all encompassing term of Guided Human-Equine Interactions (GHEI).

GHEI practitioners come from backgrounds such as teaching, nursing, social work, and counselling, or they are horse specialists such as riding instructors. Outside of a practitioners own professional organisational structures, there are no statutory regulations, ethical guidelines, professional standards or quality assurance systems governing the growth of GHEI practice in the United Kingdom (UK).

Explicitly involving horses in contemporary human therapy and learning is still relatively novel, and as such lacks a strong evidence base on which to ground
practice. Nine quantitative studies are available that have explored the outcomes of GHEI. Whilst these have limitations, they provide valuable data which is critically reviewed in Chapter Two. However, there is no published research into the underlying social, language and cultural practices involved so without this knowledge, it may be that the wrong outcomes are being measured.

We do not yet know the limitations of GHEI as practitioners are constantly finding even more creative ways to involve equines in their practice. A basic assumption in this thesis is that GHEI practice is evolving through the language used to describe and explain practice. This is, the language used to say why horses are involved, how they are involved, and the outcomes of this involvement. This language does not simply describe the GHEI world, it creates it. So, the research reported in this thesis is focused on how individuals involved in GHEI select different ways of talking about their interactions with the horses. This is discussed in Chapter Three.

The importance of this research is in furthering understanding of the meaning given to GHEI through the discourses used, which in turn creates practice. A change in practice, such as involving a horse, has created a new structure to be talked about, and the language used by both GHEI practitioners and their clients will influence how that practice evolves.

The research question to achieve the overall aim of the study is **how are guided human equine interactions discursively constructed?**

**1.1 Motivation for this Research**

In order to understand how this study evolved, I will attempt to offer some insight into a personal journey that led to this research. My family ancestry provided me with a love of horses, but being the second eldest of nine children meant it was impossible to ride at a stable yard, let alone have my own horse. My first remembered contact with a pony was at the age of three years when small fingers curled through the mane to take a secure hold and a small face was buried into the pony’s neck in order to inhale her unique scent. Thus a lifelong bond was formed with horses and my formative years were spent helping out in stable yards and with donkey rides. I was delighted to acquire
my first horse in early adulthood, but because of financial limitations I was only able to obtain ‘problem’ horses.

In adult life, I built a career first in psychiatric nursing and then moved into general nursing in accident and emergency departments. Later I worked as a midwife with a specialist interest in substance misuse. Subsequently, I became an adolescent health specialist working with children and young people in the criminal justice system. It was here that I began to realise there were many parallels between being alongside ‘problem’ horses and trying to engage ‘problem’ young people. Both expressed their distress through their behaviour. I also realised the way I tried to be with my horses was also the way I tried to be alongside young people. This included modelling respect, trust, unconditional positive regard, congruity, authenticity, boundary setting, and reward. Warmth, patience, and appropriate humour were also important elements.

Reflecting on the similarities on the ways of being with both horses and young people led me to try and learn more about any common ground. A brief web based search to determine if there were other health practitioners, with experience of horses who held similar views, revealed a widespread culture of involving horses in therapeutic and learning interactions with children and adults that has been available in United States of America (USA) for the past sixty years.

In the USA, a wide range of practice was taking place in a variety of settings. Medical students were working with horses to learn bedside techniques, horses were being taken into hospitals to visit patients, they were being used as guide horses for the visually impaired, work was taking place in prisons, horses were involved in corporate development, domestic abuse programmes, juvenile detention, and the list goes on. It seems there were no bounds to the creativity involved with putting people and horses together for whatever reason. A range of practitioners from backgrounds such as psychotherapy, psychology, counselling, nursing, teaching, social work, and cowboys were all involved in creating and delivering specialised programmes involving horses.
A brief review of the UK situation suggested practice was by no means as widespread as the USA, but there was a growing interest. Practitioners such as horse specialists, mental health workers, and teachers, were travelling to America to train and gain experience and then returning to the UK to set up practice. However, this initial review also revealed that development of practice in the UK lacked any form of quality assurance, had little academic evidence to support equine involvement, and there was a lack of clarity on processes and delivery. Theories to justify practice were either unstated or aligned with existing theoretical models, such as psychotherapy.

The conclusion drawn, was that research into GHEI was imperative. Practice appeared to be expanding without a sound evidence base, and seemed to lack any clear systems or processes. It was unclear what meaning practitioners and clients gave to their involvement in GHEI and how they accounted for the involvement of a horse in therapeutic and learning practices.

1.2 Structure and Organisation of Guided Human Equine Interactions

Concerns about the rise of GHEI without any form of governance or structure were recognised in the USA and in 1996 the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) established a mental health branch of their organisation. This is the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association (EFMHA).

In 1999 another organisation was formed in the USA called the Equine Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA). A European division of EAGALA was founded in August 2003 of which the UK is part. EAGALA states it is dedicated to improving the mental health of individuals, families, and groups around the world by setting the standard of excellence in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAGALA 2008).

It appears that the primary difference between the two organisations is that EAGALA has a focus on the improvement of mental health through a treatment model based on psychotherapy. This includes qualified mental health
practitioners such as psychotherapists, whereas EFMHA has a wider focus that encompasses emotional growth.

The aims of both EFMHA and EAGALA are to develop professional standards, provide training, organise conferences, facilitate web based forums, and publish newsletters. Both aim to promote the field of GHEI through illustrating what they perceive to be the positive outcomes that can be obtained from therapeutic and learning activities with horses. However, these outcomes are primarily illustrated through the marketing literature of private organisations who deliver some form of GHEI, through case studies, qualitative feedback from participants or practitioners, theoretical reasons why horses should be involved, and through small scale outcome based research. Both EAGALA and EFMHA acknowledge the existing evidence base is not academically sound. However, they do not acknowledge that practice contains some basic assumptions which have yet to be explored. One of those assumptions is that GHEI is good for clients.

One further organisation, established in the USA in 1997 was Epona Equestrian Services (EES). This organisation is named after the Gallo-roman goddess of horses who was worshipped by the Celts from around 300 years BC (EES 2008). Epona appears to have been a protector of horses, worshipped by those whose livelihoods were dependent on them. The modern day Epona organisation in the USA is still reliant on horses for livelihoods. There are approximately 150 Epona approved instructors in the USA and across Europe (EES 2006).

Practitioners of any form of GHEI do not have to be a member of any of these organisations, or undergo any formal training, in order to practice in the UK. They do not have to hold a qualification in any particular profession prior to setting up in business. If they do undergo training under the banner of any one of the three American organisations, the training can last from three days to one year and cost anything from £650 to £7,000.

In the USA there are also a plethora of smaller organisations offering some form of GHEI and/or training for would be practitioners. This is being mirrored now in the UK as evidenced by the growing number of marketing websites. In the UK in October 2005, at the start of the PhD, I found there were five
organisations known to be offering some form of GHEI and around 100 practitioners registered with EAGALA across the UK and Northern Europe. During the same period there were around four thousand practitioners registered in the USA (Pointon 2005). These figures do not take into account practitioners that were not members of EAGALA. In March 2008, through a desktop review, I found 41 organisations marketing their service via the internet in the UK. As of March 2010 this figure had risen to 106. Table 1 graphically depicts this trend.

Table 1: GHEI Marketing of Practice in the UK

![Graph showing increase in GHEI marketing in the UK from 2005 to 2010.](image)

Table 1 shows a year on year increase in GHEI practice in the UK, yet it is not clear exactly what social processes are involved in bringing horses into therapeutic and learning work. Each practitioner could structure and account for their practice very differently. There is no understanding of the meaning practitioners, or clients, give to their involvement of equines.

The only source of material from which to begin to understand practice in the UK is the marketing literature available on each organisation offering a GHEI related service, such as web sites and leaflets. This material shows that
practitioners come from a variety of professional backgrounds, suggesting potential for a multi-disciplinary approach to GHEI. Yet, it is not clear how this eclecticism impacts on practice, and ultimately on clients. One way to begin to understand this is by looking at the language used to describe GHEI practice.

The purpose of the following section is to illustrate how the historical and social context of equine-human interaction has helped develop our language of horses.

1.3 The Origins of Guided Human Equine Interactions

Humankind has a long and shared history with the horse (*Equus callabus*). Two of the oldest pre-historic recordings of this relationship are the cave paintings at Almatira in Northern Spain and Lascaux in Southern France (Morris 2000). Drawn by Palaeolithic Magdalenian artists over 15,000 years ago (Krumbein 1997), they depict the hunting of horses, though images also suggest the wearing of halters, which indicates domestication (Lawrence 1988).

Mythology provides us with insight into the human-horse relationship. The anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1983) tried to understand human thinking through the study of the *structure* of myths from many cultures rather than their *content*. He concluded that myths act at a higher level than language because, despite our modern day translations and possible change of content, myths do not change their basic structure. He suggested these structures, or mythemes, are grounded in concerns that are universal for all humans across all cultures. He further concluded that myths show how human thinking transcends the constraints of time, culture and language. Thus, by understanding how horses are portrayed in mythology, we can begin to understand the origins of the language we now use about them.

Horses appear in many myths, one being the half human half horse Chiron the centaur. The centaur myth originated in Mesopotamia around 3,000 BC (Mendia-Landa 2005), before becoming enmeshed in Greek mythology. It is the first recorded association between horses and healing where Chiron is
represented as the founder of medicine and medical teaching (Frantz 1992). Although there has to be caution in interpreting myths in the context of our own contemporary culture, it seems the thinking behind a myth of a centaur lends itself to an ideological assumption of a union between horses and humans that resulted in healing and teaching.

However, the myth of centaur does have a paradox. Other centaurs were given to riotous behaviour and fighting with humans, lending a further ideological assumption that a union between horses and humans can result in conflict, possible destruction, and fear.

Mendia Landa (2005) contends that we have a poor understanding of how myths have influenced our thinking and subsequently our language. Yet, it may be this relates more to the process of naturalisation described by Fairclough (2001). According to Fairclough (2001), naturalised thinking and our subsequent language contain assumptions which are ideological. There is no fixed meaning to the term ideological. However, Powers (2007) defines it as an interpretation of a social relationship that creates social meaning and has social consequences. Thus, we have a social relationship with horses, which can exist outside of any physical interaction with them, through images in the media, art or literature for example. This non physical relationship still creates a social meaning, which, although it may vary in different cultures, still impacts on our thinking and subsequent language. So, historical and cultural involvement with horses have helped shape how we structure our language when talking about them. However, due to naturalisation processes, we may not be aware of these influences.

This suggests the mythological centaur has become so naturalised in our thinking and language that we are now unaware of it. There is no certainty that the centaur myth has influenced the development of GHEI in the 21st century. Yet, it is curious that horses and humans are involved in therapeutic healing and teaching work 5,000 years on from the inception of a myth that originally made these links.

Humans have had a long social relationship with horses and associated history of thinking of horses either as healers, teachers, or as something to be feared.
Whilst it is not clear to what extent these ideological assumptions have spread beyond their original societal boundaries, it appears that any language practitioners or clients use about horses may be deeply embedded.

As with other animals, the horses’ role in human society depends on human need. Horses are used a source of food, as pack, dray, or riding animals, in sport and leisure pursuits, as well as an inspiration for art and literature. Horses have also been involved in human spiritual growth, such as as a religious symbol for the Celts. Across the south of England there are 16 horses carved in the hillsides. The reasons why they are there are unclear, but they stand today as symbols of a past that acknowledged the importance of the horse.

The earliest recorded link between horses and human mental health can be credited to the Dutch physician, Swieten (1700-1772), who advocated riding to reduce hypochondria and hysteria (Riede 1988). In 1790, at a Quaker Retreat in York, psychiatric patients worked in a natural setting with animals (Page 2001, Levinson and Mallon 1997). This provided a more therapeutic environment than was accepted at that time and set precedence for the deliberate involvement of animals as a treatment mode for individuals with mental health concerns. By the 19th century the introduction of animals to psychiatric institutions had spread. Recorded examples include Bethel, Germany in 1867 and Washington, USA in 1919 (Urichuk and Anderson 2003).

Around the same period, there was a separate dialogue emerging about horses. This involved a move away from thinking of horses as being ‘broken’ in order to meet human need. This new way of thinking is generally referred to as natural horsemanship or ‘horse whispering’. The actual commencement of this movement has been credited to several individuals such as Rarey in 1870 (Evans 1995), and to Roberts in the 1980’s (Roberts 1996). However, it could be argued that many horse orientated cultures, such as the Native Americans and the Mongols, used natural horsemanship techniques long before the concept of a whisperer was mooted. Yet, this changing attitude towards horses is apparent through the language used to write and speak about them. Thus, talk of ‘breaking’ a horse is oppositional to the natural horsemanship term of ‘gentling’ a horse. These two words reflect two very different ways of preparing a horse for human contact and riding. Breaking a horse intimates
the practices involved in fracturing its spirit to prepare it for human mastery, whereas gentling suggests an altogether lighter, sensitive touch that prepares a horse to accept human partnership. These two words, breaking and gentling, offer some insight into how language constructs practice and has consequences for those involved.

What is interesting from the literature on natural horsemanship is that seminal authors on natural horsemanship report on the emotional growth they personally experienced through using this gentling approach (Blake 1975, Irwin 2005, Rashid 2000, Roberts 1996). Irwin (2005) for example intrinsically aligns his progress in natural horsemanship to a cathartic voyage of self-discovery. As his understanding of equine social processes advanced, so did his understanding of his own interpersonal relationships. From his personal journey, Irwin (2005) eventually developed a model of therapeutic riding called Equine Assisted Personal Development.

Irwin (2005) is not alone in aligning his personal growth to his interactions with horses. Across America, horses have been actively involved in formal programmes of human self-development for the past sixty years. One of the first institutions to specifically involve horses in therapeutic work with children is Green Chimneys in New York State founded in 1947 (Green Chimneys 2007). This work was influenced by the pioneering work undertaken by Boris Levinson who used dogs in clinical psychology practice (Levinson and Mallon 1997). He conducted a small scale study with ‘disturbed’ children with his dog attending the therapy sessions. He concluded that many children who were withdrawn and uncommunicative could interact positively with a dog (Levinson and Mallon 1997).

Levinson’s work is generally credited as setting in motion a growing variety of animal assisted therapy and activities (AAT), primarily involving dogs. He believed that animals acted as intermediaries between children and adults, where the child could satisfy a need for physical contact and safely form bonds that could later extend to humans. Taylor (2001) reviewed the evidence base on AAT and concluded that the majority of supporting evidence involves case studies, survey responses, or is based on theory alone and not empirical studies. However, there are outcome based studies. Examples of studies exploring physiological outcomes of AAT for humans involving canines
includes an improved recovery from cardiac conditions (Friedman et al. 1990, Jennings et al 1998), an enhanced ability to sequence temporal events in patients with chronic degenerative diseases of the brain (Goldman 1990), as well as reduced triglyceride and blood pressure levels in psychiatric patients (Barker and Dawson 1998). Examples of studies exploring psychosocial outcomes include, fostering socialisation (Barba 1995, Zimmer, 1996), enhanced nurturing behaviour (Mallon, 1994, Netting et al. 1997), increased self esteem (Zimmer 1996), and a decreased sense of loneliness (Corson and Corson 1981).

One of the challenges involved in critiquing animal involvement in human physical and emotional wellbeing is the broad range of practice that comes under the auspices of AAT. For example, it is difficult to establish a commonality between stroking a dog to reduce blood pressure (Barker and Dawson 1998), visiting a cow to enhance nurturing behaviour (Mallon 1994), or a session with a therapist working with a horse in an enclosed arena delivering GHEI. AAT not only involves different species of animals with all their inherent qualities, unique characteristics and variable human conceptualisations of them, but it also involves different styles and types of interactions as well as different expectations of outcomes. Whilst Chandler (2005) describes AAT as an adjunct therapy for a therapist to involve any animal into whatever style of practice they already deliver, there are just too many variables to state with certainty what role the animal actually plays in any outcome.

Providing incontrovertible outcome data from animal assisted therapy/activity studies presents a considerable challenge. However, much can be done to improve our understanding of the meaning given to involving animals in human interactions. Research that accounts for meaning will provide us with a deeper understanding of the involvement of a species of animal, such as horses, in therapeutic and learning interventions.

1.4 Chronology of this Research

Initial proposals for this research were presented to the University of Southampton School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences (now
the School of Health Sciences). This resulted in an MPhil/PhD studentship. The studentship commenced in October 2005 on a full time basis, but ill health, family trauma, and a subsequent need to work to generate income resulted in a change to part time status in July 2006. Alongside my PhD studentship, I am employed as a chief executive of a charitable organisation that works with young people who exhibit violent behaviour.

The initial research question for the study was what are the social processes involved in guided human equine interactions? However as the study progressed it became apparent that the primary social process involved in GHEI was language. Language is a social process which tells us something about the social world of GHEI. Further reading suggested the constructionist approach to language, which perceives each person as building his or her own dynamic reality through their discourses, was applicable to this study. The relevance of this approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

In February 2006, I was awarded a Florence Nightingale Travel Scholarship and in March and April of that year travelled to Utah, Nevada, Arizona and California exploring different equine assisted practice across those four states. The scholarship included attendance at a major international conference organised by EAGALA with practitioners from across the USA, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and Britain. During this time I took the EAGALA Level One course to become a mental health practitioner in the field of equine assisted therapy. Although I have not practiced for the period of this research, it was a good opportunity to develop a deeper insight into GHEI by experiencing it both as a client and as a practitioner first hand. This course is not recognised by my professional body which is the Royal College of Nursing and Midwifery.

Whilst in America, I was asked to become a member of EAGALA and act as the research lead for Europe, South Africa and Australasia. This involved being a mentor for any member who wanted to undertake research. This has been a valuable link in keeping up to date with developments as practice expands. During the course of this research, I supported three practitioners in the UK and one practitioner in the Netherlands, all of whom were interested in measures of effectiveness. In March 2009 I gave up this role due to pressure of work and study.
An academic report on the travel scholarship was submitted to the Florence Nightingale Foundation. This report is available via the Florence Nightingale Foundation website at www.florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk.

As part of the dissemination process from the travel scholarship, I organised two national workshops. The first workshop was for members of the Home Office and Youth Justice Board with a policy remit for substance misuse. Prior to taking up the MPhil/PhD studentship I had been working for the Home Office as a policy advisor for the treatment of children in the criminal justice system. The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of GHEI with policy makers. Despite a lack of evidence of effectiveness, practice was beginning to spread so the workshop was used as a basis for discussion on practice. It was held at a private addiction centre in Gloucester that offers GHEI as part of a treatment programme. All the attendees took part in a GHEI session. Feedback from participants revealed they felt GHEI had to be experienced in order to understand it. They thought it could be beneficial. However, they required evidence of effectiveness before they would consider GHEI within policy documents. Since that workshop, one prison has piloted GHEI with inmates.

The second workshop was aimed at practitioners across the UK. This involved two trainers I had worked with in California coming to Britain to facilitate a three-day workshop. Twelve people from across the UK attended.

In August 2006 the research for this thesis received university ethical approval. Subsequent amendments had to be made to this approval during the course of the research. These are discussed later in the thesis in the Client Study.

A pilot for the first study, the Practitioner Study, took place during September/October 2006. Following amendments to the interview schedule, ten interviews were conducted with practitioners of GHEI between November 2006 and April 2007 at various locations across the UK.

In October 2006, the first European EAGALA conference was held in Kilmarnock in Scotland where I presented a poster on the planned study. In October 2007,
a second European conference was held and I presented a paper on GHEI and research governance. These were not peer reviewed.

In November 2006 I was accepted for an entrepreneur scholarship by the Rural Women into Business European fund. This scholarship provided me with the necessary training to set up a social enterprise on GHEI. As part of this scholarship I was matched with an animal centre in County Antrim in Ireland. In January 2007 I visited the centre and was able to do a series of presentations on GHEI at equine establishments.

A poster presentation was made at the University faculty conference in June 2007 and in October 2007 I was asked to speak to equine students at Nottingham University. In June 2008 I presented a paper at Southampton University medical faculty post graduate conference which was Highly Commended.

In July 2008 I started the second study which involved an analysis of two websites marketing GHEI. In August 2009 the third and final study, the Client Study, commenced.

In total, four oral presentations have been made to my peers in the School of Health Science, one on GHEI, one on Discourse Analysis, one on Metaphors and one on the insights gained from this research.

In addition to the research training offered as part of the PhD studentship, I have actively sought additional support and training outside of the University. This has included a five day course on interviewing from the Centre for Social Research, attendance at a three day conference on Discourse Analysis in July 2008, and seven workshops relating to business planning. A three day course on Metaphors was attended in September 2009.

In January 2010 I successfully bid for a grant of £11k from the Isle of Wight Local Authority to fund a pilot study to determine if GHEI engages perpetrators of domestic abuse. At the same time I was successful in gaining a £38k grant from MIND for the lease of farm base on the Isle of Wight. This was to establish an eco therapy centre for children and young people with experience
of mental distress. In February 2010 a bid to Natural England released a further £380k of national funding to engage more vulnerable young people through the eco therapy centre. The development of the centre is now underway.

The international and European conferences, internal and external training, as well as the extensive travel across the USA and the UK experiencing different models of practice have all contributed to the development of the level of critical thinking required to further this research. Practice in the UK is limited in comparison to the USA, so I cannot stress enough the importance this networking had on the development of this thesis. There has been such value in meeting many individuals with an interest in GHEI, as well as all the support I have received from those with an interest in discourse analysis who have supported me in my struggle to understand the many differing contours of social construction, discourse theories, and their practical application.

1.5 Supervision

Dr Caroline Ellis Hill and Dr Paula Kersten from the School of Health Sciences (previously Health Professions and Rehabilitation Science) initially supervised this research. In January 2006, Dr Anne McBride from the Animal Behaviour Unit, School of Psychology, offered assistance, which was an additional advantage due to her knowledge of animal behaviour. Dr Kersten was not available for a period of time due to maternity leave but returned to work in November 2006. This combined supervision has provided a unique blend of expertise that has been invaluable in helping shape the research, with each supervisor bringing their exceptional specialities to the supervisory sessions. During the first academic year, the meetings were held on a weekly basis, although as my health deteriorated or I was away on the travel scholarship this became less frequent. After transfer to part time status, meetings continued on a weekly basis initially to help make up for lost time and then were changed to fortnightly. From October 2008 they were held on a monthly basis.

In November 2007, Dr Zeeman from the School of Nursing and Midwifery (now School of Health Sciences) added her support and expertise to the supervision.
team. Her knowledge of discourse analysis and constructionism was greatly welcomed as naturalisation of language means that it can be challenging to free thinking and writing from within this naturalised discursive framework.

Supervision has been of an incredibly high standard. I felt challenged and supported whilst being skilfully guided through the research process. To have had the privilege of four supervisors for whom I have the utmost respect and regard has been a humbling experience.

The supervision for this research brought together four well respected academics from differing disciplines. They worked as an efficient and productive team in guiding the academic development of this thesis. In addition, work on the thesis brought together a network of GHEI practitioners in the UK. This network, which started from the contacts made through the travel scholarship and participants in the practitioner study, has evolved into a collaboration of individual practitioners who are keen to promote research. This collaboration has provided valuable feedback on the research as it progressed.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two critically reviews the research literature relevant to guided human equine interactions (GHEI) whilst Chapter Three sets out the methodology for the thesis. There are then three studies in this document that inform the overall research. Each of these studies is grounded in the same methodology therefore Chapter Three also provides a justification for the selected methodology that is relevant across all three studies. It describes the discursive framework that underpins the research design, which is social constructionism, and how that informed the choice of the theoretical grounding of discourse analysis. Finally, the Methodology Chapter concludes with the operational part of the framework, which includes the specific discursive approach adopted for all three studies within the overall thesis.
Three chapters then follow describing the qualitative studies undertaken. Each contains a subsection on the relevant methodology, and a section on methods. The findings are included in each study chapter alongside a discussion of the interpretation of those findings. The three studies take the sample and data from different sources indicated by the name of the study; the Practitioner Study (Chapter Four), the Website Study (Chapter Five) and the Client Study (Chapter Six). Each study sought to account for how GHEI is discursively constructed.

Chapter Seven contains a discussion of the key insights gained from all three studies and relates this to the implications for GHEI practice. Chapter Eight provides conclusions on the research, which includes reflection on the methodology, as well as recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2 Introduction

The introduction provided a preliminary preface for the rationale for the research. The importance of this research was grounded in the expansion of practice in the UK. This expansion is taking place without any understanding of the meaning given to involving horses in therapeutic and learning practice. The given assumption was that GHEI is evolving through the language used to account for the involvement of horses, and the discourses employed in this process construct practice. Further detail on the nature of language, and how reality is constructed in language, is provided in the Methodology Chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to build on the introduction to provide a sound rationale for the research. This will be achieved through exploring what is known about GHEI, thereby highlighting what is not known.

This chapter commences by charting how the literature review took place. The chapter is then divided into sections relevant to the available literature such as quantitative and qualitative studies, literature reviews, and finally books on GHEI. The chapter concludes by summarising the parameters, dimensions and scope of this thesis in relation to the aim of this research, which is to account for the increasing involvement of horses in both therapeutic and learning practice by asking how are guided human equine interactions discursively constructed?

2.1 Goal of Literature Review

The goal of this literature review is to illustrate how GHEI has previously been studied, and highlight gaps in the available research. As the literature is limited, the review will look at all types of research, GHEI interventions and clients. Knowledge gained from the review will strengthen the rationale for the
specific focus in this thesis on questioning how GHEI has been discursively constructed

2.2 Sources of Literature

The first step in the literature review included establishing a list of key terms under which to search for relevant literature. This involved terms identified as relating to GHEI. The term guided human equine interactions has been constructed specifically for this thesis in order to cover the broad range of practice taking place. Therefore, it was not appropriate to search under this term alone.

Search terms included [human horse interaction] [equine facilitated learning] [equine assisted psychotherapy] [equine experiential learning] and [equine assisted therapy]. The terms [therapeutic horsemanship] and [therapeutic riding] were later added to this key list.

Although these latter terms relate more to horse riding (hippotherapy) than therapeutic work taking place on the ground, there was some value in understanding the role of horses in providing physical therapy even though those studies were not included in the review. The term [therapeutic riding] yielded the majority of published studies. These were mostly centred on physical outcomes, but there were several studies that looked at riding as part of a psychotherapy treatment programme and these were included.

The key words were used to search electronic databases/gateways. Databases were searched from 1975 to present day. The rationale for this date relates to commencement of research on AAT (Levinson and Mallon 1997). The databases searched covered a wide range of cross disciplinary academic sources (table 2).
### Table 2: Cross Disciplinary Databases

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<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Database</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The National Foundation for Educational Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The British Education Index</td>
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<td>Anthropology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology, nursing and mental health</td>
<td>Medline</td>
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<td>Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL)</td>
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<td>Cochrane Library</td>
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<td>Life Science Service</td>
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<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts</td>
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<td>Blackwell Synergy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)</td>
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<td>ISI Web of Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equine ethology</td>
<td>Animal Behaviour Abstracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Dissertation Abstracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>The Linguistics and Language Behaviour Abstracts database</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process of exploring these databases for relevant literature was aided by the use of Boolean searches so that nesting (the use of parentheses to group terms together), and truncation (where all variations of a word were retrieved), could take place.

Alerts, using the key words, were set up via Google Scholar so that each time a new posting was made it was readily accessed. Three different global web based discussion forums for practitioners also provided access to relevant
literature. These were the Equine Assisted Therapy forum (www.equineassisted
therapy.org.uk), the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association
(www.narha.org), and the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
(www.eagala.org).

A further source was found in two bibliographical databases. One provided by
EAGALA and accessible to their members, the other was available for purchase
through the mental health branch of the North American Riding for the
Handicapped Association EFMHA. The academic literature catalogued on these
databases is relatively limited, and not all material listed is accessible in the
UK. However, practitioners in the USA were helpful in forwarding otherwise
inaccessible documents.

From all search sources, a total of 36 publications were identified of which 14
were unobtainable despite library requests and emailing the author or
college/university direct. These 14 articles emanated from the USA and were
not published in peer reviewed journals. They were found in a variety of media
such as magazines or newspapers or they were college or university course
submissions.

Of the 22 publications obtained, four articles were found to be based on
remedial vaulting over a wooden horse, which were not relevant. Therefore, a
total of 18 publications were reviewed. These were peer reviewed articles,
dissertations from academic institutions, or papers considered significant by
the three key GHEI organisations in the USA. These publications are critiqued in
the following section (section 2.3)

2.3 Key Studies on Guided Human Equine Interactions

In biomedical and, to some degree, social science research, evidence is
generally perceived to have a hierarchy which ranges from statistically refined
methodologies to grey literature (Evans 2003). It is important to consider
different types of research questions within this hierarchy to provide a rounded
view of a topic such as GHEI.
The following section is based on the categorisation of available studies on GHEI into the different genres based on this research hierarchy.

2.3.1 Quantitative Studies

Some authors consider systematic reviews of trials (meta analysis) to be at the top of this hierarchy (The Cochrane Collaboration 2008) whilst others argue that randomised controlled trials are the most reliable form of scientific evidence (Lachlin, Matts and Wei 1998). However, a meta analysis within the field of GHEI is not yet possible due to a paucity of trials. Research into GHEI is in its early infancy and we do not yet know how practice is constructed in the UK, although it appears that horses may be involved in many differing and unique ways as there are a range of interventions that come under the auspices of GHEI.

Nine quantitative studies relating to guided human equine interactions published between 2002 and 2009 were identified. All the studies sought to explore the effectiveness of GHEI. Effectiveness was defined in various ways which included measuring improvements in symptoms of mental distress and emotional, behavioural, or social functioning as well as measuring attitudes of effectiveness. GHEI practice varied across these studies. For example, Gatty (2005) considered the psychosocial outcomes of riding a horse whilst research by Anderson (2006) did not involve contact with horses or clients as it was a study of attitudes towards horse involvement in therapy. A summary of these studies is provided in table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Title, Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Klontz, Bivens, Leinart, Klontz, USA study</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>What are the treatment outcomes for patients being treated by Equine Experiential Therapy? Hypothesis – general symptom severity would diminish following treatment</td>
<td>Psychological measures pre treatment, post treatment and 6 months after treatment. Brief Symptom Inventory, (psychological symptom patterns) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (Self actualisation)</td>
<td>N=31 (9 men and 22 women) aged 23-70 (mean 44.7) attending a residential facility receiving group therapy with EAET. Included those receiving minimum 8 sessions. Total of 66 individuals were recruited, 49 consented to participate and 31 completed six month follow up. Only those completing follow up included.</td>
<td>Scale scores increased significantly from pre to post test and there was no significant change from post test to follow up. Authors concluded that participants showed significant and stable reductions in psychological distress and enhancements in psychological well being.</td>
<td>1) Measures outcomes over a three point period including 6 months after treatment 2) Provides a theoretical background of psychodrama 3) Use of reliable and validated tools</td>
<td>1) Researcher selected outcomes to be measured 2) Non random sample 3) Relatively small number of participants negates generalisability 4) Personal attention from therapist may lead to participants wanting to show positive outcomes 5) Limits to stated long term effects as measured at six months post interactions therefore unsure if stated effects will last beyond this 6) No detail of ease of application of the research tools used or of any limitations. A 203 point self reporting tool requires level of literacy and focus to complete on 3 occasions 10) No accounting for confounding variables such as being outdoors 11) No comparison/control group – i.e. the results may have been just as significant without any interactions or it may have been the group work, instead of the EAET. Title of paper misleading 12) Samples that are too small are unable to provide statistically meaningful analysis 13) Statistics may only be relevant for use with results from an experimental design 14) It is not know why the participants attended the residential centre or the context of the centre 15) Five therapists and one horse handler could impact on standardisation of practice 16) Loss of subjects completing 6 month follow up leads to uncertainty on stability of change reported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value of research to this thesis: Equines framed within the field of psychodrama providing a strong theoretical background to practice. Positive outcomes noted. Research framed with a psychological context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shambo, L.</td>
<td>Pilot study: is Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) effective in the treatment of complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Equus Spirit</td>
<td>Is EFP effective in treatment of complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?</td>
<td>Self-report questionnaires measuring depression, anxiety, disassociation and life functioning administered mid term and post interactions as well as four months after the programme concluded</td>
<td>Adult women who had PTSD involved in a 10 week course of EFP referred from out patient psychiatry unit or local therapists n=6</td>
<td>Results reported as universally positive with significant decreases in depression</td>
<td>1) Practitioner delivered all the sessions thereby ensuring some consistency in delivery 2) Research focused on one group with a diagnosis of PTSD rather than a wider group with differing diagnoses 3) Progress measured over three periods of time 4) Use of reliable and validated tools 5) Research designed by an academic researcher (PhD) therefore academically supervised 6) Funding for the research obtained via different charitable sources thereby negating any charge of bias in relation to the funding body</td>
<td>1) Researcher selected outcomes to be measured 2) We do not know if recovery from PTSD is linear 3) Relatively small number of participants negates generalisability 4) Personal attention from therapist may lead to participants wanting to show positive outcomes 5) Limits to staded long term effects as measured at four months post interactions therefore unsure if stated effects will last beyond this 6) No baseline measurement taken 7) No detail of ease of application of the research tools used or of any limitations 8) Findings state difference was found however the statistical tests used are not detailed 9) Researcher who oversaw the pilot study was also a director of the facility where the research took place thereby leaving research open to accusations of bias 10) No accounting for extraneous variables that may have influenced outcomes 11) No comparison/control group- i.e. the results may have been just as significant without any interactions or it may have been the group work instead of the EFP etc 12) Samples that are too small are unable to provide statistically meaningful analysis 13) No mention of how sample size was calculated 14) Statistics may only be relevant for use with results from an experimental design 15) Without the details of the statistics used it is not possible to critique the statistical test 16) Not published in a peer reviewed academic journal</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Value of research to this thesis:** Participants all had a diagnosis relating to mental distress and the research is focused on this, thereby centering GHEI practice within a mental illness treatment modality. Language centred on diagnosis, illness, depression, recovery etc. Positive outcomes noted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann, D.</td>
<td>Equine Assisted Family Therapy (EAFT) for High Risk Youth</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>EAGALA Archives</td>
<td>What are the outcomes of EAFT?</td>
<td>Outcomes study using parent Youth Outcomes Questionnaire (Y-OQ) at admission and discharge plus follow up from same clients one year from discharge – average of five equine assisted family sessions</td>
<td>Children from 6 families – 7 male, 4 female, aged 8 – 17 years referred from a family resource centre and receiving treatment on an outpatient basis. Prevalent diagnosis of conduct disorder n=11</td>
<td>Total Y-OQ scores averaged 71.5 on admission and 47.6 at discharge – author concludes a statistically significant reduction in parental perception of the severity of behavioural and emotional symptoms.</td>
<td>1) The researcher was the therapist therefore ensuring a consistent approach 2) Y-OQ is a reliable and validated tool. Chronbach’s alpha was used to test the Y-OQ in a study outside of this one which provided the internal consistency for the Y-OQ (Burlingame et al. 1996) which showed a consistency level of .97 across three samples (must be .70 or higher). 3) Average reduction of 23.9 points on the Y-OQ scores over five sessions was reported, which is a significant change</td>
<td>1) Researcher is the director of the private organisation undertaking the research. 2) There was a cost of $800 to each family for the five sessions – the parent/s were then asked to rate changes in the child. This may have resulted in an effect where positive change was reported due to vested interest in outcomes (cognitive dissonance) 3) Previous treatments or concurrent treatments were not accounted for i.e. medication or individual therapy – it was known that ‘several’ of the children were taking psychotropic medications 4) Mixture of psychiatric diagnosis such as psychosis and conduct disorder in the participants means that EAFT is seen as ‘one cure for all ailments’ yet in traditional mental distress treatment the antecedents and presentation of mental illness are reportedly more complex than this. For example psychosis, which may be an organic disorder, may require a different approach to a behavioural disorder. 5) Five subjects also had a secondary diagnosis of substance misuse – it is not known the extent of this use or how it has been accounted for in the analysis. 6) Whilst the researcher was the primary therapist, thereby ensuring some consistency in approach, there is some evidence to suggest that therapists will react differently to individual families. 7) Relatively small number of young people participated in the study (n=11) from 6 families thereby negating generalisability. 8) Children differ in their presentation of psychological stress from adults. Progress may not be linear – they may perceive their progress differently. 9) Y-OQ is a lengthy tool to administer with some complex and intrusive questions. Requires a high level of literacy and English as a first language to complete 10) Psychotic symptoms do not seem to be accounted for in the Y-OQ directly i.e. voices, paranoia, thought insertion.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
|   |   |   |   | 11) No detail of who funded the research – parents self-funded participation in the therapy sessions – ethical question of participants paying to take part in research  
12) USA cultured questions thereby applicability of tool outside of USA may be compromised  
13) Tool focuses on pathology rather than strengths argues this is not ethically acceptable in as much as asking child negative questions so focusing on limitations rather than positives/strengths.  
14) Y-OQ only measures pathological outcomes therefore not suitable tool for education/teaching/learning outcomes  
15) No accounting for variables outside of the young person’s control  
16) Not published in a peer reviewed academic journal |

**Value of research to this thesis:** Language used is centred on treatment, diagnosis, behavioural and emotional symptoms. Parents perceived their child’s emotional and behavioural ‘symptoms’ to improve.
Trotter, K.  

USA  

study  

The Effectiveness of Equine Assisted Group Counselling with At Risk Children and Adolescents  

2007  

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation  

University of North Texas  

Is equine therapy effective in decreasing children and adolescents negative behaviours whilst increasing their positive behaviours?  

Determined by reducing internal and external behaviour problems in children at risk for academic or social failure.  

Outcome measurement instruments – the BASC (Behavioural Assessment System for children) parent and self rating scales, ... in a classroom setting or n = 79 who received Classroom based Intervention Counselling for one hour a week for 12 weeks  

n = 219  

Elementary and middle school children identified as at risk for academic or social failure ages 8 – 14 who attended public schools in North Texas.  

Results of the BASC indicated a statistically significant improvement in 5 areas whilst the comparison group showed no significant improvements.  

Author concludes that EAC is clinically effective in increasing positive social behaviours and decreasing negative social behaviours. She further concludes that EAC is a more effective treatment than curriculum based school guidance.  

Strengths of study  

1. Experimental design with use of comparison group  
2. Reliable and valid outcome measures  
3. Larger number of participants than other such studies  
4. Use of a parent and teacher report measures to triangulate findings  
5. Triangulation of different outcome measurement instruments i.e. parent and teacher versions of BASC  
6. Pre and post test research design  
7. The BASC uses a five scale approach to external behaviour – aggression, attitude to teachers and school, conduct problems and hyperactivity thereby defining negative behaviours. It also includes an eight point scale for defining internalised negative behaviours.  
8. Sample did not include any child receiving counselling or whose first language was not English  
9. Good completion rate (164 children completed)  

Limitations of study  

1. No accounting for the style of therapy or the quality of the therapeutic relationship  
2. Previous treatments or concurrent treatments were not accounted for  
3. No accounting for extraneous variables such as interactions and influence of peers, other sources of familial support.  
4. No standardisation of practice between therapists, i.e. same therapist or same therapeutic approach to working with the horses. Could be improved by schools using the same therapeutic approach all at once  
5. Use of the term at risk of failure not standardised. It is not clear how it was developed or how standardised the reported behaviour is. It is not clear what is defined as failing.  
6. Disproportionate amount of time in experimental group i.e. 24 hours – i.e. 24 hours a week as compared to 12 hours in the comparison group  
7. Primary confounding variable – comparison group not taken out of school setting  
8. Disproportionate amount of time in experimental group – i.e. 24 hours (EAC) to 12 hours schools based intervention.  
9. Not the same therapist across all groups i.e. style of therapy not standardised  
10. Children not randomly allocated  
11. Relatively small sample size available about the effectiveness of equine assisted therapy  
12. No mention of how sample size was calculated i.e. power calculation  
13. Gender differences may impact on results (two thirds male). Not clear if evenly proportioned across both groups.  
14. Partial effect size was calculated to determine strength of the relationship between treatment and outcome however there are limitations in relating the effect size to conclusion about treatment.
### Value of research to this thesis:

Language is focused on measuring negative behaviours of children. Shows a high completion rate therefore ability of GHEI to engage children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aduddell M USA study.</td>
<td>Effects of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) on Adolescent Attitudes and Behaviours</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Colorado Christian University</td>
<td>Is EAP effective in the treatment of depressed adolescents who display violent behaviour?</td>
<td>Rating scale (6-point) on the effectiveness of EAP</td>
<td>150 residential treatment centre directors and psychologists who worked with 11 - 20 years and/or children under 10 were contacted and 59 agreed to participate – data from 30 were omitted because of their use of EAP (new to practice). Completed responses - n=26</td>
<td>Highest reported rating considered EAP to be very effective in dealing with low self esteem, timidity, and disrespectful attitudes. Very effective in assisting with social difficulties, depression, aggression, and attachment disorder. Effective in dealing with irresponsible behaviour.</td>
<td>1) Explored a wide range of outcomes using a self prepared 20 item scale on effectiveness from extremely effective to non-effective. A strength because it looked at a wider range of outcomes than other studies i.e. wide range of outcomes explored including medical diagnosis, behaviour, social and emotional 2) Also looked at when EAP may be non-effective which is reported as eating disorders, substance misuse and violence</td>
<td>1) Small sample size (n=26) 2) Self designed tool, therefore not validated 3) Pre-ordained outcomes by researcher 4) Measure focused on ‘effectiveness’ – term not clearly defined in the study 5) Low response rate from initial sample frame to completion (17.3%) – large number omitted from study because of being new to practice, discontinuing practice or not fully completing their responses 6) Interesting finding that EAP is effective across a spectrum from timidity to disrespectful behaviour – what constitutes these terms may be defined differently by different people and organisations 7) No statistical analysis applied although low response rate may have negated this 8) No mention of how sample size was calculated 9) Researcher adds their observational data from ‘several’ sessions to the findings but does not provide a rigorous framework in which this observation (and/or consent) took place 10) Gender differences – research states that more males that females were involved in the treatment centres who took part but no actual figures provided. 11) Findings state EAP not effective with violence but it is very effective with aggression – no definitions of these terms provided. For example, there is some evidence to suggest a female exhibiting aggression would be more likely to subjectively be perceived as violent than a male counterpart exhibiting same behaviour due to gender stereotypes 12) The research question is answered by organisations stating they would not use EAP with young people who were violent until the violent behaviour was ‘neutralised’. However the researcher goes on to state that EAP is non-effective in violence outcomes. Until such times as EAP is trialled with young people who are violent this can not be known.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Value of research to this thesis: Language focused on exploring impact on negative behaviours. Also explored when GHEI may be non-effective
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
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</table>
| Turner, J. | Effects of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) on Client Discharge | 2005 | University of Denver | Does the number of EFP sessions have an effect on status at discharge?    | Retrospective data gathered from a census database. Clients divided into two groups, those discharged successfully and those discharged unsuccessfully where successful = 'lower care'. Chi square test applied | N=100  | Average length of stay - 4 months mean number of sessions 2.25. Findings suggest that EFP had no statistical significant impact on discharge status (p=.164). However, those with four or more sessions had a higher percentage of positive discharges than any other group. | 1) Large number of participants in comparison to other studies  
2) Retrospective study that focused on one measurable outcome | 1) No standardisation of practice  
2) Sample taken from one institution  
3) Differences in length of stay of each young person from 0.4 to 46.1 months is a confounding variable  
4) Chi Square test was used (must exceed 20 and group compared must be the same size) used to test strength of association between qualitative variables however it is not clear exactly how many were in each group i.e. discharge successful and discharge unsuccessful although one untitled diagram details positive discharge at 40 and negative discharge at 60 (uneven distribution).  
5) Average number of sessions each client had was 2.25 sessions. No detail provided as to length of sessions or content.  
6) Discharge status may not be reliant on EFP alone  
7) Only males were involved in the study as the facility did not take females. Therefore any application of findings to females is irrelevant. Researcher observed females (process not detailed therefore unable to comment on rigour) and concluded there were differences in communication, group dynamics and expression of emotion between males and females - although this was unrelated to the research question on discharge status  
8) Not published in a peer reviewed academic journal. |

**Value of research to this thesis:** Language focused on emotional and behavioural disorders and treatment modality. Positive outcome from GHEI in relation to “positive” discharges
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of study</th>
<th>Limitations of study</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gatty, C. USA</td>
<td>Psycho-social Impact of Therapeutic Riding: a pilot study</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Eagala Archive</td>
<td>To what degree did mean perceived self esteem scores differ among disabled children and adolescents before and after a therapeutic riding programme?</td>
<td>Revised form of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale for Children to measure perceived self esteem. Scale consisted of 10 items rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree – wording was revised to accommodate client group</td>
<td>4 girls and 1 boy with a range of learning and/or physical disability, aged 8 – 13 years</td>
<td>Average scores before the programme (3.32, SD=.22) were compared to the average scores after (3.64, SD=.33) Wilcoxon signed ranks test (T=2.03, p=.02). According to the author this demonstrated a significant positive increase in self esteem.</td>
<td>1) Focus on one possible outcome 2) Could provide a model for further research</td>
<td>1) Limited report therefore lack of detail to ascertain rigour 2) Small sample size - therefore Wilcoxon signed ranks test is unable to provide statistically meaningful 3) No detail on how sample was selected 4) Wording of original scale was revised thereby questioning the reliability and validity of the adapted scale 5) Not clear how long programme lasted or detail of interactions 6) Other factors can effect self esteem such as parenting approach which is not accounted for 7) Although the Rosenberg has been used over many years (since 1965) it is now questionable if the negative questions it contains i.e. –‘all in all I am inclined to think I am a failure’ – are now ethically acceptable (discussed further in main body of work). Negatively worded questions can be difficult to answer 8) Not published in a peer reviewed academic journal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Value of research to this thesis:** Language focused on disability and also on self esteem. Research showed an increase in measurements of self esteem
Shultz, Remick-Barlow, Robbins  
USA study  

**Author:** Shultz, Remick-Barlow, Robbins  
**Title:** Equine - Assisted Psychotherapy: a mental health promotion interactions modality for children who have experienced intra family violence  
**Year:** 2006  
**Publisher:** Health and Social Care in the Community Vol 15 Issue 3 pp 265 - 271  

**Question:** Is EAP an effective modality for a cross section of children referred to a psychotherapist for various childhood and mental health issues and who have experienced intra family violence?  

**Method:** Pre and post treatment measurement by the Global Assessment of Functioning Scale (GAF) of children aged 4 – 16 years of age receiving Between 1 – 116 sessions of EAP. Due to disparity between the numbers of sessions each children received only those with six or more sessions underwent further analysis  

**Sample:** N=63 children aged 4 – 16 years of age (37 males and 26 females) of mixed ethnicity (51% non hispanic white, 46% hispanic and 3% black) referred to a psychotherapist for treatment over an 18 month period (convenience sample) – all children were included (unselected consecutive sampling)  

**Findings:** Researcher report that all children showed improvement in the GAF scores with author reported statistically significant correlation between the percentage improvements and the number of sessions attended. Univariate analysis showed the greatest improvement in the younger children (under 8 years) with females showing significant improvement over males. Children with a history of domestic abuse showed the greatest improvement in scores. No significant differences between Hispanic and non Hispanic children. Authors conclude that using GAF scores as the only outcome measure restricts the understanding of the effects of EAP  

**Strengths of study:** 1) One practitioner delivered all the sessions thereby ensuring some consistency in delivery  
2) Mixed ethnicity and genders  
3) Use of reliable and validated tool  

**Limitations of study:** 1) Researcher selected outcomes to be measured  
2) We do not know if recovery from abuse is linear  
3) Relatively small number of participants negates generalisability  
4) Personal attention from therapist and team may lead to participants wanting to show positive outcomes  
5) Long term effects not known  
6) No detail of ease of application of the research tools used or of any limitations – 100 point scale requires literacy and focus to complete  
7) GAF aimed at children aged 6 – 17 years this is a wide range to make it age appropriate  
8) Application of tool depends on rater, training and diagnostic group. Not known who applied the tool i.e. therapist or researcher  
9) Youngest child to take part was four years of age where their ability to complete would be questionable. Tool was designed for children over age of 6 years  
10) Mixed diagnosis of children including mood disturbance, ADHD, PTSD, disruptive disorder, adjustment disorder, and other disorders may impact on findings through diagnostic differences  
11) No accounting for extraneous variables that may have influenced outcomes  
12) No comparison group – i.e. the results may have been just as significant without any interaction  
13) Samples that are too small are unable to provide statistically meaningful analysis  
14) No mention of how sample size was calculated  
15) GAF are dependent on diagnostic criteria and whilst scores in this research showed improvement from serious impairment to moderate impairment – this means there was a focus on impairment rather than strengths which may impact negatively on child/family.  
16) Not clear on process of informed parental consent  

**Value of research to this thesis:** Language focused on mental health and violence. Positive outcomes shown for children exposed to domestic abuse. No cultural differences noted in scores.
Subject Variables Affecting the Believed Efficacy of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

Comparison of subject variables with believed efficacy measures. Survey was used where an individual recorded their subject variables, then read a brief fictional session of EAP and then records a believed efficacy

300 individuals – 141 men 158 women (mean age 30.3 years) gathered from various institutions such as a university and ski lodges across Alberta

Results indicate a previous knowledge of EAP, a positive attitude, and a higher experience level with horses contributes to higher levels of believed efficacy of EAP (p<.000). Gender, pet ownership, personal experience with EAP and hometown population did not contribute significantly to believed efficacy levels (p<.01). Positive attitudes and higher levels of experience with horses were highly correlated (r=.752). The author concluded that believed efficacy of EAP is not affected by traditionally believed subject variables such as gender, pet or horse ownership and urban/rural upbringing.

1) This study addresses the issue of variables that have been highlighted as limitations in the other studies in this literature review. It addresses a key belief held by a participant that the treatment they are receiving will be beneficial. This belief could effect therapeutic outcomes (placebo effect)
2) Triangulation of methods which included recording subject variables, vignette with no outcome and a survey to record level of believed efficacy.
3) Subject variables selected through a literature review to identify those known to have an influence on the therapeutic processes. The tool to measure these variables was designed from the findings of the literature review.

1) No details of how sample size was calculated i.e. power calculations
2) Convenience sample not randomly selected i.e. a university and ski lodges therefore questionable if representative of wider population
3) Concludes that attitudes towards horses was the most powerful indicator into belief of efficacy but only used one measure of attitude
4) Did not measure previous experience of psychotherapy
5) Concludes that previous knowledge of EAP does increase individual’s belief in efficacy but the level of knowledge was not measured, nor if that knowledge was accurate in any way. Interestingly 45% of those interviewed had some knowledge thereby leading to further questioning if the sample was representative of the wider population or if EAP is more widespread in Canada.
6) Not published in a peer reviewed academic journal

Value of research to this thesis: Language used around attitudes to horses highlighted as the most relevant indicator in the belief that GHEI is effective.
Interestingly no studies emanated from the UK. The majority of the studies had relatively small numbers in each sample group such as n=5 adolescents who had a learning or physical disability (Gatty 2005). However, one study did have n=300 participants in an attitudinal study that drew its sample from a general population accessing universities and ski lodges (Anderson 2006).

The outcomes measured included belief in the efficacy of equine assisted psychotherapy (Anderson 2006), self esteem (Gatty 2005), successful discharge from a residential treatment facility (Turner 2005), psychological symptom patterns and self actualisation (Klontz et al 2007), behavioural and emotional symptoms (Trotter 2007, Mann 2002), improvement in diagnostic symptoms (Shultz et al 2006), and depression, anxiety, disassociation and life functioning (Shambo 2007). One study explored a wide range of potential outcomes (Aduddell 2006). In all of these studies the outcomes were apparently pre-ordained by the researcher and the participants were not involved in the design of the research. The diversity of outcomes explored suggests it is not entirely clear what GHEI is intended to achieve.

A range of tools were used to measure these outcomes. Some were reliable and validated instruments such as the Youth Outcomes Questionnaire 11 (Mann 2002), the children’s Global Assessment of Functioning scale (Shultz et al 2006), and the Behavioural Assessment System for Children (Trotter 2007). Others devised their own rating scales (Anderson 2006, Aduddell 2006), or adapted a scale for the purpose (Gatty 2005).

Validated outcome instruments such as the Y-OQ can provide valuable data from participants who are receiving clinically based psychotherapy from a qualified therapist who involves horses in their practice. However, it may not be so relevant for educators with non clinical objectives. It is not known in what way the objectives between therapists and educators delivering GHEI may be at variance and consequently the variables measured in these studies may not actually address the most appropriate outcomes. They may simply be informed by the researcher’s theoretical frame of reference.

All instruments have limitations and the main limitation for all these tools is that they were not designed to account for the assumptions inherent in
practice. This is a fundamental consideration in relation to the purpose of this research which is to account for how GHEI is discursively constructed and is discussed in section 3.2 of Chapter Three.

The study by Trotter (2007) is somewhat more robust than the others in that it is a comparison group quasi experimental design. There are different types of randomised controlled trials (RCT) and whilst the double blind RCT may not be possible in GHEI, as both practitioner and client would know which group they had been allocated to, a simple RCT is possible. For example, participants could be randomly allocated to GHEI or a similar interaction. The study by Trotter (2007) offers a valuable insight into the challenges of a RCT in relation to GHEI. The children in her study were not randomly allocated; instead they participated either in an equine assisted counselling group (EAC) or a curriculum school-based counselling group. However, Trotter (2007) does recommend future studies look more in depth at randomisation.

At the outset of the study by Trotter (2007) it is noted that there are significant potential confounding variables between her two groups. For example, the EAC group (n=140) were not based within their usual educational setting but were taken out of school to a ranch, whereas the significantly smaller comparison group (n=79) remained in the school setting. It is therefore not known if the findings are related more to the out of school experience or to the EAC. An out of school non equine setting would be a better comparison.

The EAC experimental group received two hours a week interactions for twelve weeks making a total of 24 hours interactions for each child, whereas the comparison group received only one hour per week making a total of 12 hours per child. The same counsellor did not provide interactions for all the children. Counselling may differ between counsellors and indeed between different clients and counsellors as well as between educators and their students. Lambert (2004) estimated that thirty per cent of the variance comes from the therapeutic relationship which includes warmth, empathy, acceptance and encouragement. The study by Trotter (2007) could not account for the style of therapy delivered by a counsellor, or for the quality of the therapeutic relationship.
Lambert (2004) also estimated that forty per cent of outcome variance comes from factors outside of the therapy itself. Variables that were not controlled for in this study included medical diagnosis, neighbourhood, parallel interactions, peers, substance use, and parental, educational, social and spiritual support. The remaining fifteen per cent of outcome variance according to Lambert (2004) can be attributed to the placebo effect where change is expected. So, whilst this study by Totter (2007) provides valuable data on the worth of GHEI in engaging children, the research does have limitations. A major limitation to replicating this study in the UK is that GHEI is not a service that is currently endorsed or delivered via the National Health Service or education system. Therefore, funding to pay for the sessions, as well as access to participants would be problematic. Only using self funded participants may lead to biased results.

In general, quantitative research on GHEI is limited by the lack of standardisation of practice, the assortment of pre-determined outcomes which may or may not be the most appropriate, small sample sizes, along with the range of outcome tools used to collect the data, the inability to account for variables, to access participants, and financing research. This culminates in a challenge for the researcher who is trying to determine the worth of GHEI. These challenges can not be surmounted until we know more about the assumptions underlying practice, processes that are taking place, and the meaning given to GHEI. Accounting for the discursive construction of equine involvement in practice is one step further towards a more rounded knowledge of GHEI.

2.3.2 Qualitative Studies

Five qualitative studies on guided human equine interactions were found and reviewed. Four of the articles were related to case studies and whilst case studies can include quantitative data, the four detailed here are descriptive. The remaining study (Worms 2009) was based on interviews with practitioners of GHEI. They all offer valuable data, as together they show how GHEI is used in certain circumstances. The main points from these studies are presented in table 4.
Table 4: Qualitative studies on Guided Human Equine Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of Study</th>
<th>Limitations of Study</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worms, K.</td>
<td>Why Horses? Why Not Horses? Equine Facilitated Therapy for Mental Health Treatment</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Smith College School for Social Work. Dissertation for Masters of Social Work</td>
<td>What are the general benefits of EFT and for whom is EFT most appropriate?</td>
<td>Semi structured interviews took place with 10 practitioners of EFT. Interview structure specific to EFT as applied to mental health treatment. Eight of the interviews were conducted by telephone because of distances and farm commitments of participants</td>
<td>10 therapists and riding instructors with advanced degrees and at least one year’s experience of professional equine experience.</td>
<td>Findings showed no preferred client profile but practitioners felt it would be inappropriate for some individuals such as those who were suicidal, with active psychosis, were abusing substances, or had a dissociative disorder. Also reported to not be suitable for those with a history of animal abuse. Immediate feedback from the horses was found to be the fundamental element of practice. Clients were perceived to have an easier time addressing transference with the horses in comparison to human therapists. Author concluded that EFT helps to decrease the fear and intimidation of treatment as well as decreasing physical symptoms of PTSD, improves client motivation and aids in the positive internalisation of self. EFT also seen to address boundaries, assertiveness, and emotional engagement with others.</td>
<td>1) Addresses research from the perspective of those providing EFT 2) Findings provide an in depth analysis of the perceptions of practitioners of EFT</td>
<td>1) Only focused on positive aspects of EFT. Participants not questioned regarding any potential deleterious effects on either horse or client. Fear of horses was however felt to be a contraindication. 2) Sample recruited from personal contacts and from an open email forum. Respondents were therefore self selected. 3) Small sample size may not have accounted for diversity (all white/non Hispanic) and gender (all female), and geographical location (all non urban). 4) No triangulation of respondents i.e. client interviews. 5) Further research identified includes “awareness of the benefits of EFT” (p.63) thereby leading reader to consider bias may be inherent in study. 6) No concept of the researcher in the study or reflexivity such as her interest in EFT, what led to the study, and her positioning.</td>
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</table>

Value of research to this thesis: Language focused on mental health treatment. Identifies a decrease in physical symptoms of mental distress. Suggests when GHEI may not be effective.
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of Study</th>
<th>Limitations of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vidrine, M. Owen Smith, P. Faulkner, P.</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Group Psychotherapy (EFGP): application for therapeutic vaulting</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Issues in Mental Health Nursing 23 pp 587-603</td>
<td>Outlines a model of EFGP at one centre called Horse Time where vaulting is used on the back of a moving horse for children aged 7 – 10 years. Vaulting was part of a psychotherapeutic treatment plan.</td>
<td>Case study on one programme running at one facility. Detailed cases on the programme include: 1. One young person who was moving to a new foster home helping to re-home a horse. 2. Unknown number of boys becoming physically affectionate with the horses. 3. Unknown number of girls who had been sexually abused receiving biofeedback from the horses when they were unable to relax at trot.</td>
<td>The metaphorical meanings embedded in the children’s experiences were reported as flying – of ‘lifting a child and carrying them forward’ Children were reported as experiencing comfort in the presence of strength. Their emotional content was suggestive of empathy despite their history of anti-social behaviour and they felt the horses provided them with trust, approval acceptance, and were non-judgemental.</td>
<td>1) Study drew on a theoretical model of Jungian analysis and equine archetypes in the analysis 2) Covers the use of therapeutic metaphor 3) Provides insight into how one model of GHEI is applied at one centre – provides details of the programme.</td>
<td>1) Focused on the physical and psychological aspects of vaulting more than EFP but does make theoretical links between the two 2) Not rigorous in terms of research methodology - descriptive 3) Does not report on the subjective experiences of any individual child. 4) No discussion on the observation or analysis process as to how a ‘clinical description of a typical vaulting group’ was established 5) No discussion on limitations of the study 6) The stated outcomes from the ‘typical vaulting group’ were based on the observations of the author 7) Details were provided on generalised basis – i.e. ‘the children often saw their own lives reflected’. No triangulation of this data.</td>
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**Value of research to this thesis:** Language use centres on psychotherapeutic model of practice. Includes horse involvement as a metaphor. Metaphor use based on Jung’s archetypes which are linked to myths and are universal prototypes.

Does EFT facilitate victim empathy?

One young man in the US in a young offenders institution (juvenile detention) who, at the age of 14 years, had murdered two men and raped a young boy and was therefore a convicted ‘capital offender’.

The participant took part in an 8 week programme of equine assisted psychotherapy based on the principles of power and control whilst in prison and the case study details his progress towards victim empathy.

1) Provides an account of EFT with a young person convicted of capital offences.

1) The case study methodology or methods are not detailed. The paper focuses on detailing the programme that is used and the underlying theory around power and control as well as the benefits of using horses in therapy.

2) Detail provided on the young person is limited i.e. no age at time of the study

3) The conclusion that the young person expressed victim empathy is unclear – the detail of the case study is that he cried and felt guilt and remorse yet it can not be stated with any certainty that the young man felt this – or expressed guilt and remorse. There is limited information to know if this was directed at the victim or at his own circumstances. It is also not known if the horses facilitated this process or if he would have expressed this remorse regardless of any interactions. However the author clearly aligns this to the horses breaking his barrier of toughness. It appears that the young man was discharged from detention and now has horses which he works to keep. The case study would benefit from further detail on this as this is an important outcome.

4) Parallel interactions and treatments were not accounted for in the case study

5) This study is limited in terms of rigour and thus credibility

Value of research to this thesis: Language used is related to the institution to which the young person belongs (juvenile detention) and is therefore focused on reducing client power and control issues and building empathy. Provides insight into the language used by one practitioner.
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Strengths of Study</th>
<th>Limitations of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Christian, E. | All Creatures Great and Small utilizing Equine Assisted Therapy to treat eating disorders | 2005 | Journal of Psychology and Christianity Volume 24 No 1 pp 65-67             | Case study based on the work of a secular therapist working at a centre for people with eating disorders—author aligns EAT to the AA model of seeking a higher power | One client with a diagnosis of an eating disorder undertaking two sessions of EAP | Centred on illustrating the operational model of EAT used at this centre. Use of therapeutic metaphor relating to eating disorders. | 1) The case study provides some psychoanalytical depth to the two sessions of EAP undertaken by one client with an eating disorder.  
2) The author provides an insight into the particular model of EAP used and how it works operationally including the use of therapeutic metaphor  
3) Provides an insight into how one practitioner talks about her practice and her client. | 1) It is not clear from the paper what the aims of the case study were or what method was used. For example was the author a participant observer? The author was working as a secular therapist and was trained in EAP but it is uncertain from the text what her role actually was. There are ethical considerations if the author was the researcher and also the therapist i.e. ambiguity of roles, confidentiality etc.  
2) A framework for the observations was not outlined.  
3) Approval from any ethics committee not detailed.  
4) There is no explanation as to how the participant for the case study was selected nor about informed consent therefore not clear if this participant was the most appropriate  
5) The relevance of this case study to the research for the study detailed is that it provides some insight into the work of a secular therapist who states the aim is for the client to realise the need for support from God and to allow the Holy Spirit into the process. As one of Gods creatures the horse was believed, by the author, to be part of that process. It is not clear if the client also held the same beliefs. However any overt religious practice limits the value in terms of applying the findings more widely. |}

Value of research to this thesis: language focused on an aim for the client to realise the need for support from God. Aligned to AA model of seeking higher power.
| Author   | Title                                                                 | Year | Publisher            | Question                                                                 | Method                                                                 | Sample                                                                 | Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Strengths of Study                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Limitations of Study                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Burgon, H. | UK Case Study looking at the therapeutic benefits of riding therapy. | 2003 | Anthrozoos, 16(3): 263-276 | What is the psychotherapeutic effect of riding therapy?                  | Case study methodology including triangulation of participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. | A group of 6 young women in Hampshire, UK who had additional needs relating to their learning and who were attending an educational establishment where they were on a physical programme of riding of a horse. | The theoretical basis of this study was experiential learning as the centre provided an opportunity for hands on learning through the involvement of horses. Increased confidence and self concept were reported in the participants. It was also reported that the therapy aided social stimulation and led to transferable skills being acquired. | 1) Although this study is focused on riding, it is included in this review because it is the only published UK study relating to some aspect of GHEI. Thus it provides an insight into developing practice in the UK in 2003. 2) The study is rigorous in applying a stated case study methodology and triangulating participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. This rigour enhances the credibility of the study. 3) Clearly states how participants were selected 4) Ethics approval granted from Exeter University with informed consent from the participants. 5) Provides an insight into how one practitioner talks about practice and clients. 6) Published in a peer reviewed journal. | 1) There are ethical considerations in participant observation including the skills required in separating the role of the observer from the participant. It is not clear if the observation was overt or covert although informed consent was obtained making it more likely to be overt 2) Sample was all female and Caucasian 3) Small sample size limits it to offering a descriptive account 4) Challenges of measuring psychosocial outcomes by observation and with interviews and questionnaires with individuals with additional learning needs where language and reading/writing may be challenging. Details of the findings from the questionnaires are not included in this paper. 5) Amount of detail on each case provided in this paper is limited 6) No detail on the method i.e. how the recordings from the participant observations were made 7) Case note details are also used but it is not clear from the original methodological details that these would be included – this may be how the participant observation was recorded although this is not explicitly stated |

**Value of research to this thesis:** language focused on social skills and learning. Only UK study available.
To address rigour, case studies can triangulate methods to focus on the dynamics of a single case, or small number of cases (Bowling 1997). Burgon (2003) for example used participant observation, interviews and questionnaires to report on the progress of six women over a six month period, thereby improving the credibility of her findings. The other three case studies reported here (Vidrine et al 2002, Moreau 2005, Christian 2005) were not as rigorous in their application of a case study research methodology and instead detailed selective and subjective perceptions. If case-study research is to lead to an improved understanding of GHEI then researchers need to address the manner in which they conduct and report their research.

This observation of lack of rigour is not intended to totally negate the contribution of the four case studies reported. They are diverse in terms of their geographical location, the type of GHEI practice undertaken, and the client group they were working with, and so provide a background, albeit somewhat limited, of the complexity of standardising the application of GHEI. This includes the philosophical background such as that provided by a secular therapist (Christian 2005), the theoretical background such as the model based on Jungian archetypes (Vidrine et al 2002), the location such as a prison (Moreau 2005) or an educational riding centre (Burgon 2003), the client group such as adults with additional learning needs (Burgon 2003), those with an eating disorder (Christian 2005), a child serving a life sentence (Moreau 2005), as well as the style and type of practice such as psychotherapeutic vaulting (Vidrine et al 2002), horse riding (Burgon 2003) and therapy (Christian 2005). In the previous section we saw how lack of standardisation of practice is impacting on the evidence base and these four studies confirm the diversity and complexity involved in achieving such an ideal.

What these case studies do not provide is an understanding of how we can take this complexity and formulate a meaningful whole without constraining practice. As previously stated we do not yet know the limits of GHEI. In taking this stance, the assumption is that there is no one truth that can be contained, defined, measured and standardised, and in attempting to do just this we may lose something far more valuable. We would never know what we do not know if all research was confined to measuring outcomes and effectiveness yet, by not containing practice, GHEI is unlikely to become a recognised and accepted evidence based intervention.
One way forward with this dilemma is to utilise research methods that do not confine practice to objectively measure effectiveness. The review of both quantitative and qualitative studies indicates that the expectations in terms of what GHEI is perceived to achieve are immense and cover various physical and mental ways of being, social, behavioural and emotional issues, as well as different client groups and situational factors. The paradox of this is, by undertaking research that is perceived to be ‘lower down’ the academic research hierarchy defined by Evans (2003), an account of the meaning given to the increasing involvement of horses can be provided. In this way practice can be exposed to different ways of thinking and talking about GHEI which in turn could impact on how it is constructed.

2.3.3 Literature Reviews

Within the hierarchy of research evidence, a literature review is a useful way to share critical awareness of a subject matter. Four literature reviews on GHEI were identified. These were reviews that were either published in a peer reviewed journal or formed the basis for a qualification such as a Masters of Arts from a recognisable academic institution.

One of the challenges in assessing the reviews was the lack of detail in the publication on how systematic the review was. For example, no review detailed how they found the literature and the criteria for deciding on the relevance of the publications they included.

Criterion for assessing the literature reviews is based on work by Hart (2003). This includes identification of a stated aim, ensuring a critical evaluation of appropriate literature related to the aim, and relevance of the review to the research for this thesis. The main points are summarised in table 5.
Table 5: Literature Reviews on Guided Human Equine Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Strengths of Reviews</th>
<th>Limitations of Review</th>
<th>Value of research to this thesis: language focused on mental illness, diagnosis, and treatment. Notes there may be potential effects on horses of participating in GHEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lentini, J and Knox, M.</td>
<td>A Qualitative and Quantitative Review of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy with Children and Adolescents</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation 13 (1) 17 - 30</td>
<td>Review of the literature on EFP with children and adolescents. The theory and background of EFP is summarised with reference to various theoretical perspectives such as Freudian, Jungian, Cognitive Behavioural and Psychodynamic models. The research is summarised and possible applications are explored in relation to diagnostic criterion such as eating disorders, oppositional defiant disorders, trauma, anxiety, and ADHD.</td>
<td>1) Accounts for the wide range of conceptualisation of EFP, theories, and names, as well as methods. 2) Useful source of references 3) First article to include small section on effects on horse by reviewing two studies one of which concluded that horses are stressed by working with at risk children – the other article simply described the characteristics of one therapy horse 4) Article first to report on negative effects on participants noted in one study which included increased aggression however they do not specify the authors/which study this is. 5) No in-depth analysis of the studies reviewed</td>
<td>1) Authors state only few articles were found relating to children therefore papers relating to adults were also included whereby these were generalised to children and young people. Papers were also included that related to riding a horse if they were felt to be therapeutic. Therefore did not account for differences between children and adults. 2) Review is descriptive rather than critiquing available research 3) Authors state that table 1 represents findings from 12 quantitative studies yet it contains 20 references to studies which include one presentation, four literature reviews, five reviews of existing programmes and one abstract. 4) Article first to report on negative effects noted in one study that included increased aggression however they do not specify who the authors/which study this is. It was concluded this was the possible result of attachment to the horse and then loss of the animal. 5) No in-depth analysis of the studies reviewed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Strengths of Reviews</td>
<td>Limitations of Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor, S.</td>
<td>Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy: an emerging field</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>MA Dissertation St Michaels College Vermont</td>
<td>Reviews the literature from AAT and relates this to EFP – recognises that practice has moved forward despite a lack of sound research evidence. Advocates proper 'credentialing', setting of standards and professional organisations responsible for 'oversight'. Questions if practice continues without attending to these aforementioned criteria that it raises ethical questions. This includes the ethics involved in marketing services as 'therapeutic' without any knowledge if they are therapeutic.</td>
<td>1) The author clearly identifies the aim of the review, which is to further the efforts of psychotherapists in utilising this mode of practice (also a limitation) 2) Wide range of issues covered</td>
<td>1) The clearly stated aim of the author indicates her bias at the outset of the review which then questions all the supporting evidence detailed in the main body of the text. This lends the reader to believe that bias is inherent in this review at the outset and only literature supporting EFP is provided without a fair critique. 2) Statements made are not backed up by the literature or are based on one person’s opinion. For example, ‘riding a horse may trigger flashback episodes of sexual abuse’ The evidence for this statement is based on the opinion of one person the author has cited. 3) Covers different therapies such as analytical psychotherapy, play therapy and cognitive therapy, but only a short paragraph is dedicated to each of these topics 4) Underlying assumption on reviewing the literature on AAT is that it can all be related to horses and psychotherapy – this leads to an ideology of the world consisting of humans and ‘all others’ 5) Further ideological assumption is the author’s stated belief in the interconnection of all species which is a paradox to the underlying ideology detailed above 6) Conclusion is for animal therapy to become established within ‘the mental health industry’ (p. 14) to protect clients – however this is a questionable conclusion given the cited literature, although it is in keeping with the stated aim of the literature review</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Value of research to this thesis:** language focused on governance of GHEI in relation to mental health/treatment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Strengths of Reviews</th>
<th>Limitations of Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frewin, K.</td>
<td>New Age or Old Sage? A review of equine assisted</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Australian Journal of</td>
<td>States that EAP’s capacity to deliver positive outcomes for adolescents and mental health clients has bought the practice to Australasia. Considers the development, status and future among contemporary counselling approaches and concludes that EAP has a great deal to offer for those with mental health issues and complex social problems. States that success with clients in the US has been impressive. New Zealand (NZ) has its own indigenous development of EAP called the Leg Up Trust which is connected with the Hawke’s Bay Recovery centre for disadvantaged youth and mental health clients. Concludes there is a future for EAP in NZ.</td>
<td>1) The review provides a historical and cultural context to EAP drawing on relevant literature and key seminal authors 2) Stated aim which is to consider the development of EAP amongst contemporary counselling approaches</td>
<td>1) Utilises research related to generalised AAT, also utilises research from physical riding therapy 2) Cites only positive findings of other studies with no critique of the studies involved 3) Provides details of only one model of GHEI which is the EAP model and no acknowledgment of other models 4) EAP already provided and funded by the district board therefore unclear as to the purpose of the review in relation to conclusion i.e. future for EAP in NZ 5) Confusion about aim – unclear if it is primarily to consider the future of EAP in Australasia or amongst contemporary counselling approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner, B.</td>
<td>New Zealand Literature Review</td>
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</table>

**Value of research to this thesis:** provides a cultural and historical context to EAP in relation to Australasia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Strengths of Reviews</th>
<th>Limitations of Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winchester, J.</td>
<td>US Literature review on youth at risk</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Thesis for the University of Maine at Augusta obtained via the EAGALA Archive</td>
<td>Provides a history of the US Juvenile system and offers an AAT model of diversion from juvenile detention</td>
<td>1) Clearly identified aim which was to identify risk factors that increase the likelihood of delinquency and to discuss diversionary programmes for keeping children out of the juvenile justice system with a particular emphasis on Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)</td>
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<td>2) The author puts forward an argument for AAT to be considered as a diversionary activity and provides evidence from the research literature to support this claim. This includes AAT as a gateway for communicating with young people who resist therapeutic interactions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1) This literature review does not specifically focus on any form of GHEI.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2) There is limited discussion of equine assisted therapy (EAT) per se. It is seen to be in a wider context of AAT and diversionary activities.</td>
<td>3) Placing GHEI within the wider remit of AAT holds the ideological assumption that all animals can serve the needs of humans – there is only two kinds of living beings which are humans and all other animals</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Value of research to this thesis:** Language based on institutional language relating to delinquency. Supports premise that GHEI is an engagement tool for individuals who may not otherwise engage with services.
These literature reviews provide a synopsis of the literature relevant to American and Australasian systems. Only one published study has so far emanated from the UK (Burgon 2003).

The aims of the reviews differ. Taylor (2002) explicitly states the aim of her review is to further the efforts of psychotherapists in utilising this mode of practice. This lends the reader to believe that only literature promoting GHEI has been included and any debate is biased in this direction. An alternative conclusion is there is a paucity of literature that actually questions GHEI practice. No such literature was identified. By asking how GHEI is discursively constructed the underlying conventions inherent in practice are questioned.

The aim of the review by Frewin and Gardiner (2005) was to consider the future of equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) in Australasia and they present a convincing argument for this to take place. The aim of the review by Winchester (2005) was to provide a rationale for a model of AAT, which includes EAP, in juvenile detention in the USA. It does not turn the question in on itself and question AAT.

Each of the three reviews have quite specific aims, from furthering the efforts of psychotherapists (Taylor 2001), to trying to understand if EAP had a future in New Zealand (Frewin and Gardiner 2005), to the wider implications of AAT in a juvenile detention centre in the USA (Winchester 2005), so the relevance to the research for this thesis is limited. They do not specifically address underlying assumptions. Notwithstanding, they do provide further insight into the direction practitioners are intending to travel and the rationales they provide for this purpose.

One review (Leniti and Knox 2008) offers a descriptive account of the available literature on a range of GHEI. Whilst the intent of the authors was to focus on a psychotherapeutic approach with children and adolescents, there was such a paucity of literature available they had to widen their remit to include adults, vaulting, and riding. Twenty sources were cited as 'quantitative' studies in a table in this review. However, some of those sources were presentations, abstracts, literature reviews, or reviews of independent facilities/programmes. One source provided four such reviews of their programme in a one year period. Notwithstanding, this literature review does hold considerable value in
the GHEI field as it is the first available attempt to look across a range of studies relevant to practice albeit through an effectiveness lens.

Three of the reviews detail the wider literature on AAT in the absence of more specific research studies involving equines. An ideological assumption underpinning inclusion of the wider literature is that the world consists of humans and all other species and that all other species are there to meet human need. Borrowing from wider literature is understandable as until such times as GHEI formulates its own evidence base, there is only the substantial grey literature to inform.

2.3.4 Books

A literature review could not be concluded without exploring published books on the subject. The majority of the authors on GHEI detail their personal journeys and personal philosophies as well as their own emotional growth and development leading to the involvement of horses in their practice. The authors reviewed here are critiqued according to the relevance of their publication to this thesis. The main points are given in table 6 on the following page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Value to this thesis:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, M.</td>
<td>The Man Who Listens to Horses</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
<td>This book traces the biographical history of the author as a horse trainer in the US as he details his communication experiences with horses across the years. As Roberts moved from breaking to gentling horses he expresses the culmination of his work as his involvement with Queen Elizabeth who acknowledged his achievements in the international equine world.</td>
<td>The strength of this book for the study on GHEI is that it provides an insight into how natural horsemanship developed on an international basis.</td>
<td>This book is focused on natural horsemanship and whilst Roberts is aligned to being a horse whisperer he is by no means the first – rather the first to publish as an authority on the subject. The relevance to GHEI and this study has to be linked to other works and theories.</td>
<td>Provides insight into how language use has consequences for practice. This has been discussed in the main body of this thesis in relation to the terms gentling and breaking a horse. Natural horsemanship developed the term gentling to indicate a practice far removed from breaking. Theoretical links can be made between the development of natural horsemanship and the development of GHEI. This is based on a different way of thinking about horses bought about by a change of our language and how we talk about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCall, E.</td>
<td>The Tao of Horses: exploring how horses guide us on our spiritual path</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Adams Media</td>
<td>The book consists of a series of interviews with some of America’s famous horse people such as the only woman jockey inducted into the Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame. Each of the interviews reveals a spiritual side to involvement with horses and how horses have influenced lives.</td>
<td>Presented as a series of case studies it offers a practical side in terms of exercises and links which help to expand thinking and creativity. The book impacts first on the emotions which, in turn, lead to reflection and processing.</td>
<td>The interviews in this book are based on spiritual journeys facilitated by the horse. The research for this study is not focused on the spiritual side of GHEI but if, and how practitioners and clients, construct this element within their involvement with horses.</td>
<td>The strength of this book in relation to this study on GHEI is the insight it provides into a spiritual side of being connected with horses from a wide range of individuals who represent different spiritual persuasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irwin, C.</td>
<td>Dancing With Your Dark Horse</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Marlow and Co</td>
<td>Irwin is a horse trainer in Canada who details in this book how building our relationships with horses can in turn heal ourselves</td>
<td>The strengths of this book is in following a personal journey from Irwin’s fall from grace as a renowned horse trainer through his interpersonal relationships and his subsequent links to GHEI. The metaphor of the dark horse is about our shadow nature and learning to tame it.</td>
<td>The limitations of this book are that it does not directly relate to GHEI in terms of GHEI practice. Whilst the personal journey and insights on the way are interesting, the publication does not provide any empirical research.</td>
<td>Provides an insight into a personal journey relating to horses and how this impacts on the author’s own interpersonal relationships. The horse is therefore used as a metaphor within this journey.</td>
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<td>Author</td>
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<td>Baker, W.</td>
<td>The Healing Power of Horses: lessons from the Lakota Indians</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bow Tie Press</td>
<td>The author was badly injured in a riding accident in the US and so began studying the philosophy of the Lakota Indians. This book profiles 12 Lakota Indians involved with horses in their culture. Provides an insight into the cultural and spiritual influence of horses on the way of life in contemporary Native American community.  This view of the Lakota Indians presented here is seen through the eyes of a non-Lakota in terms of the author’s personal journey to try and re-connect with horses.</td>
<td>It does offer insight into how subjective accounts relate to objects outside of a personal cultural and historical context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rector, B.</td>
<td>Adventures in Awareness: learning with the help of horses</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Author House</td>
<td>This book provides detail of one practitioner’s journey in GHEI. The author started a therapeutic riding programme in the 1970’s in the USA after a near death experience The strengths of this book to this study are that it offers an introduction to one GHEI programme running in the USA called Adventures in Awareness. It also details some of Rector’s life history and how her personal journey and philosophy impacted on the development of this particular model of GHEI.</td>
<td>The main limitation of this book is the style of writing, which is, at times hard to follow. This involves continual use of capitals or bold text to stress points Despite Rector’s acknowledged contribution to the field of practice, she received the highest number of citations in the literature review citation analysis; it is hard not to view this book as marketing for Adventures in Awareness (AIA). This is Rector’s own version of GHEI and is mentioned (in capitals) at least three times on each page and on one page in the introduction eleven times. This somewhat detracts from the insight she is offering from her own career to date. In relation to this study the book is very clearly focused on her own developmental practice which she does not question.</td>
<td>For the purposes of this research this book shows how a personal philosophy can impact on the development of practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rashid, M</td>
<td>Horses Never Lie: the heart of passive leadership</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spring Creek Press</td>
<td>Mark Rashid is a horse trainer who challenges the belief that a human must act as the leader in a herd. He details the different types of equine leaders and their functions in a herd and which style of leadership is the preference for horses. This is the passive leader that leads by example and not by aggression. Rashid goes on to link this theory to human socialisation. The strengths of this book are in the compassion, humour, and experiences that Rashid brings which impacts on the reader’s emotions and in turn leads to reflection and processing of the information. It does offer further insights into subjective experiences. The personal journey of the author and insights on the way are profound and interesting.</td>
<td>The limitation of this publication in terms of this study is that it does not directly apply to GHEI. The inference is more subtle. The relevance to this study is in the way GHEI itself impacts on emotion and involves processing. Rashid employs the use of metaphor through identifying equine leadership skills and then applying them to humans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publication Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lavender, D.</td>
<td>Equine Utilised Psychotherapy: dance with those that run with laughter</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Mrunalin Press</td>
<td>Previously a roman catholic priest and then affiliated with the AA twelve steps approach. Lavender moved into what he terms Equine Utilised Psychotherapy (EUS) in the USA in 1990. His initial practice was with Rector who he details as a 'psychoneuroimmunology' practitioner. Lavender is a psychotherapist and this book is focused on the psychotherapy aspect of involving horses in practice. The strengths of this book lie in the insight it provides into the world of a psychotherapist and how he relates the involvement of horses to psychotherapeutic theory and his belief in limbic resonance and a return to paradise lost. Lavender acknowledges the influence of the work of Rector (2005) in his publication and it is clear there are links in terms of his style of writing, practice and thinking. The book is written with a psychotherapist and a shaman in mind although the links between the two are not clear. It is also not clear exactly what the book sets out to do. At times it is a psychotherapeutic guide, although the author is very clear that he wishes to avoid over simplification in order to deter non psychotherapists - whilst at times it tries to link different theories outside of psychotherapy into the work with the horses. However, the book is fundamentally based on psychotherapeutic theory such as any emotion not dealt with becoming shame. So, the relevance of this publication to this research is valued but limited as the focus for this study does not include an analysis of psycho- therapeutic theory. The philosophical stance for the book is that man is superior to animal as he emerged from the animal kingdom – this was being thrown out of paradise. Lavender believes the clients he is working with are trying to return to a paradise lost. Provides insight into the psychotherapeutic application of GHEI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>McCormick, A.</td>
<td>Horse Sense and the Human Heart: what horses can teach us about trust, bonding, creativity and spirituality</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Health Communications Inc.</td>
<td>The authors are a family of psychotherapists who use Paso Fino horses to help 'emotionally disturbed' people. In this publication they describe their personal journey in integrating spirituality and religion with their psychotherapy training. They use relevant cultural literature from Scotland, India, Spain and Morocco as they trace a path of spirituality with horse people. They believe the Celts gave birth to the psycho spiritual paradigm through the horse and they look at many other spiritual links including the Carthusian monks, shamans, and Atlantis. They conclude that horses are a link to the Divine. Describes linkages between the theoretical and philosophical basis of the spiritual and psychological connection with horses which are then applied to cases the authors have worked with. At times the book moves so far into the mystical aspects of horses and the personal journeys of the authors it becomes unclear what is reality and what may be fantasy or metaphor. The value in this book is in the links it provides between the psychological and the spiritual.</td>
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All of these authors come from the USA and they indicate a strong focus on the spiritual element of work with the horses. This ranges from Christianity to Tao Buddhism and includes Celtic spiritual wisdom amongst other such beliefs. Authors, such as Rector (2005), have clearly developed their practice according to their own belief system. With other authors, their beliefs are revealed through thanking God (Irwin 2005), through invoking the wisdom of the Celtic horse goddess, Epona (McCormick et al 1997) or through reiterating a basic respect for nature through the philosophy of the Tao (McCall 2004).

A further common theme across many of these publications is that of a personal journey of the author. Many of these journeys have the capacity to draw on the emotions which circumvents the intellect, yet it appears that each of these authors is seeking to explain the involvement of horses through the language they use to describe their own subjective and personal experiences. This will be further explored in this thesis.

2.4 Discussion

Available research on GHEI has not yet subjected existing practice to a level of scrutiny through investigating inherent assumptions in practice. For example, one assumption inherent in the studies reviewed is that using horses is acceptable practice. In other words GHEI is good for clients. In addition, available research has not questioned the meaning given to GHEI or the processes involved. Until this evidence is available, horses will continue to be used in interactions without any understanding of whether they are actually resulting in harm. Notwithstanding, the literature suggests that practice is creative, on offer to many different client groups, and appears to be evolving to meet, what is perceived to be, a need.

There is a common theme that links all of the studies and authors reviewed here, aside from an absence of the direct voices of clients or equines. That is wherever the study appears on the academic research hierarchy; the authors have constructed their research question, practice, the horses, clients and themselves through the language they use. This construction of practice and research, through language use, is a common thread despite the wide range of
beliefs, procedures, client groups and locations that have been identified in this review.

An author's use of language in their research has consequences for practice, as was seen from use of the terms gentling and breaking when referring to horses. Take as an example the case study of the young man referred to as a capital offender who was serving a sentence for murder and rape. The basis of the case study was an institutionally perceived need to address his power and control issues (Moreau 2005). The subsequent equine practice focused on addressing power and control and not on meeting any need the young man may have identified. Therefore the institutional language used, such as capital offender and power and control, had consequences for the type of GHEI that ensued. Thus, discourses contained within the language used can enable or constrain practice.

In summary, the literature review highlighted a lack of understanding about the assumptions involved in GHEI and the meaning given to the practice. No research to date has looked at GHEI through this specific lens. It was also touched on that language, or more specifically discourses, can enable or constrain, thereby having consequences for practice. Therefore, the aim of this research is to provide an account of the meaning given to the increasing involvement of horses in therapeutic and learning practice by asking how guided human equine interactions are discursively constructed.

The next chapter will build on the framing of this statement. It will look in more detail at a systematic and explicit approach to account for the discursive construction of GHEI.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3 Goal of this Chapter

The Literature Review highlighted a wide range of non standardised but creative practices. It was concluded that a commonality across all the research available, is that GHEI has been described and explained through the language used to inform about experiences and practice. It was noted that the language used has consequences for how GHEI is practiced.

This chapter builds upon language use in GHEI to shape the formation of the primary research question for this thesis: how are guided human equine interactions discursively constructed? The overall goal of this chapter is to justify the philosophy, theories and practical application of social constructionism and discourse analysis inherent in the methodology which frames the research aim and question. The purpose is to outline the specific constructionist and discursive stances taken in this thesis.

It was acknowledged in the previous chapter that practice in the UK is evolving alongside anecdotal evidence that many practitioners are looking to the more long standing practice in America for their knowledge base. In addition, it was noted that only one published study on GHEI was undertaken in the UK, with the majority of available research emanating from the USA. Therefore, in trying to answer the primary question of how GHEI is discursively constructed, this chapter provides a rationale for exploring the wider range of discursive resources across cultural contexts.

The challenge for this chapter is to produce this information in a linear fashion. In reality the composition of the research question was an iterative process shaped in part by the unfolding philosophy and theoretical stance which informed the research framework and methodology.
3.1 Structure of Chapter

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section starts to build the framework for the study by detailing the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this research. It continues by showing how those philosophical assumptions led to the choice of a framework for the research.

The second section contains a discussion on how the adoption of a social constructionist framework led to discourse theory grounding the research.

The third section provides more detailed information on discourse analysis. Discourse analysis crosses academic disciplines and is informed by different authors, so it embraces an array of discursive approaches. Therefore, this section continues by outlining the specific model of discourse analysis as applied in the three studies that form this thesis.

This chapter will demonstrate that by locating the research within a discursive constructionist framework, an account of the discursive constructions of guided human equine interactions can be provided.

3.2 Philosophical Perspective

Methodological choices are dependent on what a researcher believes to be the nature of reality and the origins of knowledge. This is their philosophical perspective. These beliefs are assumptions we make about the universe and they are classified as assumptions, because we cannot know for certain if these beliefs hold a generalised truth. Beliefs can influence the theoretical framework for a given piece of research, and thus the chosen methodology, so it is important to start by outlining the philosophical perspective grounding the research for this thesis.

The nature of reality, or what it is to be, is referred to as ontology. How we know what we know, or what it is to know, is termed epistemology (Miles and
Huberman 1994, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, McNamee and Gergen 2006). The two terms are sometimes conflated, but together the ontological and epistemological assumptions made in this study underpin the theoretical framework and methodology for this thesis.

3.2.1 Ontology

Guarino (1995) examined seven possible definitions of ontology and concluded that, despite the differences in vocabulary used, all definitions shared the same goal. This involves questioning the assumptions inherent in any view of the nature of reality.

There are four primary ontological assumptions to be rationalised in the context of this thesis. These assumptions are briefly introduced here in order to outline the ontological perspective of this research. They are then built on in more detail as the chapter progresses.

The first assumption adopted is based on the premise that social reality is constructed. This ontological perspective means there is no absolute ‘truth’ that can be measured. As Gergen (2009) acknowledges, all truth claims are specific to traditions that are grounded in cultural and historical contexts. So, a researcher who adopts this ontological stance for their study would be unlikely to employ a methodology based on finding one single truth, such as an experimental design.

The second ontological assumption includes the belief that realities are constructed through the language used in social interactions. Language occurs in the linguistic space between people as a way of structuring our experiences, but the meanings carried by language are never fixed (Burr 2008). This is the fluid nature of language, where meanings change according to their social, cultural and historical context.

The third assumption is that language used in these social interactions is influenced by power dynamics. According to Foucault (1995), every institution controls the language used to describe itself, therefore power and language
are intimately connected and omnipresent. Foucault (1995) did not see power as totally repressive as he also recognised the productive context of power. However, he did view language as a medium for power relations to be legitimised and contested.

The fourth ontological assumption is that any social reality is only relative to the context in which it is constructed. This is termed relativism by some authors (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). There are many forms of relativism, one of which is linguistic relativity also known as the Sapir Whorf hypothesis (Chandler 1995). This is the belief that language affects thought, and thought affects language. It sees language as having the ability to affect mind, thought and reality. Linguistic relativity perceives reality as constructed through the constraints of how we can talk about it. However, this fourth assumption needs further consideration before this chapter can move on.

### 3.2.1.1 Relativism/Critical Realism Debate

The later writings of the authors that influenced this research (Burr 2008, Parker 1999, Gergen 2009) all invite debate on realism/relativism. Whilst realism postulates that a world exists outside of our linguistic representations of it, relativism argues that even if it does exist, we can not know it (Burr 2008). Burr (2008) describes research that takes a relativist stance as containing highly contentious theoretical and philosophical issues. To Burr (1995) relativism means there is no ultimate truth, therefore all perspectives are equally valid. When relativism is applied to research findings, the results of the research are relegated to only one account amongst many other possibilities, with each account being equally valid. The concern for researchers is that a relativist stance can impact on the credibility of their research.

To Parker (1999), the term relativism implies nothing exists outside of different theories, accounts and stories, therefore he argues against a relativist stance, preferring instead to promote a critical realist position. The critical realist position aims to clear the conceptual ground between relativism and
realism where researchers do not have to choose between one or the other (Banfield 2004).

The research stance for this thesis adopts the same standpoint as Parker (1999), which is critical realism. Critical realism does not equate to critical research by aiming to change the balance of power through the research. Instead, it can be equated more to subtle realism (Finlay 2006), although critical realism and subtle realism are not quite synonymous. Both approaches are on the hypothetical continuum between the extremes of realism and relativism, although there is a point at which they diverge. According to Banfield (2004 p.59), ‘unlike the straightforward claim of subtle realism that objects exist whether they are known or not, critical realism recognises that something may be real without it appearing at all’. In this way, critical realism acknowledges there may be power in language, but for these powers to be realised requires the catalyst of cultural, historical and social context. In applying this concept to GHEI, consider the interaction between human and horse which has existed for thousands of years. It is only in recent years this has been talked about in terms of a structured approach related to the contemporary institutions of mental illness, therapy, and learning.

Critical realism takes less of a hard line than relativism on the nature of reality. It acknowledges the natural world is more amenable to experimental research design than the social world, where there is fallibility to social knowledge. This is because the social world is full of agents constructing and deconstructing their social worlds, therefore a stable reality can not be accounted for. The research for this thesis stands at an interface between the natural (equine) world and the social (therapy and learning) world. However, there is no accounting for why, and how, these two worlds have been combined by social agents to construct GHEI world. The construction debate will be picked up again later in this chapter in the section on constructionism (section 3.4.2).

3.2.2 Epistemology

Taking into account the occasional blurring of distinctions between ontology and epistemology (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, McNamee and Gergen 2006),
epistemology is defined as a branch of philosophy that investigates human knowledge (Kothari and Mehta 1993) and how we share that knowledge. An assumption in the knowledge sharing related to this thesis is that social agents construct their knowledge through language, or more specifically discourses, as will be defined later in this chapter. This is based on a social reality where knowledge of subjects such as GHEI are constructed through global interactional networks involving for example practitioners, researchers, academics, authors, clients, the media, and interested social agents.

This GHEI knowledge is shared through a variety of genres such as talk, emails, books, training and research. Therefore, the epistemological stance within this study is grounded in the belief that knowledge is constructed through interactions between social agents. This is where meaning is given to GHEI.

The assumption in this thesis is that GHEI is not constructed within an individual mind, even though individualism in our culture is so deeply embedded (Gergen 2009). Instead it is constructed through the process of relating to others. Under this premise GHEI, along with other types of knowledge, is constructed to fulfil a specific function. The function of GHEI knowledge will be explored as an inherent part of the studies that make up this thesis. The researcher, as a social agent, is also included in the knowledge construction process.

The epistemological stance outlined here is built on throughout the remainder of this chapter. It is also reflected within each individual study.

3.3 Methodological Choice

Ontological and epistemological beliefs are important considerations when making a methodological choice. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994) assumptions about reality, knowledge, and truth, shape what issue is chosen to investigate. That is, the way a problem is approached and the methods used to collate the data. Gergen (2009) believes that although methodological choices fall into two prime approaches, the major question should not be related to the objectivity of quantitative approaches or the subjective aspects
of qualitative research, but of utility. Utility involves questioning the purpose of the research.

The following sections outline the quantitative and qualitative aspects of research in relation to the purpose of this thesis.

### 3.3.1 The Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach to research seeks to understand reality through objective, observable and quantifiable data. As seen in section 2.3.1 of the literature review, the studies cited under the quantitative heading sought to make a measurement. That is, to seek a universal truth with a fixed meaning. Indeed, many studies in the wider field of animal assisted therapy (AAT) have focused on measuring physiological responses in humans involved with animals. These studies sought to answer very different questions about human animal interaction than the research for this thesis, so are grounded in different views on the nature of reality.

These types of measurement studies are based on the valuing of certain fixed meanings, yet the ontological assumptions outlined in the previous section of this chapter acknowledge the multiplicity of meaning. What is valued in one study may not be so in another (Gergen 2009). The research question for this thesis, relating to the discursive constructions of GHEI, includes valuing the fluid nature of language and meaning. This negated investigating a quantitative approach to the research from the outset.

The research for this thesis required a methodology where the complexity of social reality and the multiplicity of meaning is acknowledged. Therefore, the research methodology was more in keeping with a qualitative approach.

### 3.3.2 The Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach had strengths relevant to this study question. The main strength is in the acceptance of the complexity of social realities and the belief
that what we know has meaning only within a given context or situation. Burns and Grove (2001) believe the aim of a qualitative approach is to build new ideas, or gestalts, which can be achieved by the researcher challenging assumptions. For example, it was noted in the Literature Review chapter that a common assumption within GHEI was practice is good for clients. The actual practice itself has not been challenged. By challenging assumptions inherent in practice, qualitative research can open up alternative framings of reality and new possibilities for action (Gergen 2009).

A further strength of a qualitative approach is in the provision of a methodology that focuses on communication and, in particular, language use (Miles and Huberman 1994, Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Language constructs the GHEI world and so provides it with meaning.

Despite these stated strengths, one of the challenges for qualitative research has been how to demonstrate rigour, often against criteria set for judging the rigour of quantitative studies. Rigour in qualitative research requires different criteria since the ontological assumptions are not the same. Lack of rigour in qualitative research is related more to an inconsistency in adhering to a stated stance (Antaki, Billing, Edwards and Potter 2002). However, it has to be acknowledged this in itself is challenging because the researcher, by reason of being a social agent, has naturalised commonly held assumptions and can not escape the structures of language. This process of naturalisation of ideological beliefs and assumptions, as detailed by Fairclough (2001), was introduced in Chapter Two and will be revisited at times throughout this thesis.

In order to ensure rigour from the outset in the research, a qualitative framework was required which assisted with the application of a consistent stance. Constructionism was one approach that offered a boundaried framework for this study. The primary rationale for choosing constructionism was centred on the previously stated enmeshment of the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions and the principles inherent in constructionism. One of these principles is language, which is discussed in the following section.
3.4 Constructionism

Constructionism evolved from epistemological and ontological debates that attempted to explain the way people perceive reality and create social phenomena (Brewer 2000). Yet, constructionism abounds with debate.

These debates have led to many contours of constructionism. At one end of a simplified hypothetical continuum there is a form of constructionism that considers only social reality is constructed. At the other end is universal constructionism which postulates that all reality is constructed. Along this continuum there are a host of authors who take a particular stance (Anderson and Goolishan 2006, Becker, 1996, Berger and Luckam 1966, Burr 1995, Burr 2008, Brewer 2000, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Ernest 1995, Fruggeri 2006, Gergen 2009, Gergen and Gergen 1985, Hacking 1999, McNamee and Gergen 2006, Hoskings 2002, Searle 1995, Slezak 2001, Wetherell and Maybin 1996, Wetherell and Still 1996, Von Glaserfield 1995). Affording each of these authors an established place along this line according to their beliefs would be complex and achieve little in terms of furthering understanding of this research. However, this simplified continuum does help to articulate that the hypothetical line is not straight; it takes many contours. As Von Glaserfield (1995 p.459) states, ‘there are as many different constructionist stances as there are authors’. The stance for this thesis is that reality is socially constructed and is discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

From one perspective constructionism appears confusing and lacking in definition. Yet, from another perspective, it offers an opportunity for a novice researcher to spend time reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs as well as their particular stance within the debate. Paradoxically, it provides for a consistent approach to enhance the rigour of a study whilst lacking absolute clarity and definition itself as a subject.

In seeking an appropriate constructionist stance for this study, the two approaches of constructivism and constructionism are considered. This is followed by a debate on universal and social constructionism. The purpose of
these sections is to clearly elucidate the constructionist stance taken in this thesis.

### 3.4.1 Constructivism vs Constructionism

Burr (2008) sees two differences between constructivism and constructionism. The first difference is in the extent to which individuals have the agency to change their own constructions of the world. The second is the extent to which our constructions of the world are the product of social structures.

According to Gergen (2009), constructivists perceive meaning to originate within the mind of an individual whilst constructionists see meaning as originating in relationships. So, constructivism signifies a particular relationship between individual, mind and world. An example of this is Von Glasersfeld (1995) who believes that all knowledge, no matter how it is defined, is in the mind of an individual. Within this constructivist perspective, the existence of an external world outside of the mind of an individual can not be known. Yet, as will be seen in the following section, the stance in this thesis is that GHEI exists outside of individual minds in the relational and linguistic space between people.

In contrast to the individualism of constructivism, the constructionist perspective is based on shared constructions of meaning where meaning is generated through social collaboration. There is also an emphasis on the generative and selective nature of human understanding. This question of agency or the extent to which we have freedom to construct our own knowledge is built on in Chapter Six of this thesis (section 6.3.1.1. figure 5) by relating this concept to findings from this research.

Gergen (2009 p.88) believes that the individualism related to constructivism is so deeply embedded in our culture, that any move to reconstruct what it is to be a person away from this perspective is challenging. The social collaboration involved in generating meaning is built on later in this chapter in section 3.4.3.
In relation to its function, Gergen and Gergen (1985 p.p.3-4) perceive constructionism as ‘elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live’. Whereas Hacking (1999 p.7) sees the purpose of constructionism as to ‘criticise, change or destroy something in the established order’. Hacking (1999) also questions what is constructed. He cites the example of a thesis on the construction of women refugees (Moussa 1992) and argues that it does not require research to state the obvious; women refugees are socially constructed.

To address the first point raised by Hacking (1999), it must be clearly stated that the purpose of a constructionist approach for this study is not to criticise, change, or destroy GHEI. The purpose is for constructionism to provide a framework to account for the meaning given to GHEI practice. The second point argued by Hacking relates to a possible debate that GHEI is socially constructed. The stance within this research is that GHEI is socially constructed. It is practice that is not inevitable, global or determined by the nature of things (Irvine 1990), therefore it is socially constructed. What we do not know is what the assumptions are in those constructions, and ultimately the meaning given to GHEI.

Hacking (1999) also notes that whilst the idea that everything is constructed has been debated, it is hard to find universal constructionists in academic literature. This is a challenging point. In its most extreme form, universal constructionism challenges the very basis of academia. For those who adopt a universal perspective, the assumption that all reality is constructed means there is no absolute truth or certainty. From this perspective it renders the undertaking of research or analysis of scientific studies as pointless. According to Latour (2005) and Parker (1992), from this perspective research studies would be just stories that only exist within the minds of those that construct them. In addition, Slezak (2001) explains that from the universal constructionist perspective, knowledge does not involve learning as a cognitive process. It is seen as a process that conforms to power and where academia can be perceived as a self-fulfilling power system.

If these two assumptions of i) everything is constructed and ii) academia is a process conforming to power was adopted for this thesis, it would negate the research. So, the challenge by Hacking (1999), that there is a dearth of
academic researchers taking a universal constructionist stance, is hardly surprising. If researchers subscribed to this particular stance they would perceive both academia and research as meaningless.

The constructionist stance within this thesis is not universal. The existence of horses is seen as natural, inevitable, global, and biologically determined (Irvine 1990) and not constructed. However, what is constructed is the meaning we give to equines, as well as the meaning we give to learning and therapy. This meaning is constructed within a historical, cultural and social context. This is a stance aligned to social constructionism.

3.4.2 Social Constructionism

According to Burr (2008) there is no one feature that could be said to identify a social constructionist position. Instead there are key principles. However, Gergen (1996 p.427) stipulates that constructionism is not based on a fixed set of principles as he sees it is ‘an unfolding conversation’. Whilst this analogy can certainly further understanding, there are certain principles that underlie constructionism that can be elucidated.

Drawing on various authors (Anderson and Goolishan, 2006, Brewer 2000, Burr 1995, Fruggeri 2006, Gergen 1996, Hoffman, 2006, McNamee and Gergen 2006, four key principles were elicited which were seen to be fundamental to constructionism.

The first principle already outlined is that a social construction is created through social interactions. What can be talked about in these social interactions have a historical and cultural context. For example, what may be talked about as mental illness requiring therapy in one culture may be talked about with reverence in another. Revered religious leaders who claim to hear the voice of God may be treated differently from a ‘lower class’ individual with the same claim (Cardwell and Flanagan 2003).

One way of understanding the relevance of culture and relational networks is through an adapted version of the aboriginal myth of Song Lines (Hoffman
2006 p 10). In this myth, an individual is born with just one line of a song. To make their own particular song, an individual will go on walkabout. This walkabout allows them to visit others and to hear other lines which they can choose to add to their song or not. Each line comes from another person but originates through the ancestors, or the history and culture of that individual. Eventually an individual has a complete song unique to them but each song line has been ‘borrowed’ within an interpersonal relational network. It also includes a historical and cultural relational network passing back to the ‘ancestors’.

This metaphor aids understanding of how each line of a song (or discourse) is constructed through language acquired within a social, cultural and historical context. No individual line of the song is unique, what is unique is how the lines blend together in different ways.

The second principle of constructionism which has been discussed from the outset of this thesis is the focus on the language use. Language is a social process evolved in humans to meet their need for communication (Brewer 2000, Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997). Our way of understanding the world is framed by language. As Burr (1995 p.7) explains, when people talk to each other the world gets constructed. Thus, the song an individual sings creates a social reality that is shared through the combination of song lines with others.

Bernard (2002) states there are always multiple meanings for every word, symbol or event, all of which are constantly changing over time and across contexts. The language we use creates meaning, maintains meaning and perpetuates meaning. For example, the language we use expresses our relationship with horses. This relationship is based on information and experience we have acquired over a period of time and contexts, either directly through our contact with horses, or indirectly through messages we have absorbed from our family, culture, history, social networks, and surroundings. One example of this is the myth of Chiron the Centaur (see section 1.3) who may have provided the first link between horses, mankind, and healing. Therefore, the language we use in relation to horses limits our constructions of them and reflects our constructions.
The language we use also has connotations of power which is the third principle of constructionism. Gergen (2009) divides power into that seen at a macro level within society such as institutional power, and power seen at an individual or micro level. At a macro level of power, Holden and Littlewood (1991) subscribe to the concept that knowledge created through language is the basis of power, with certain types of knowledge, such as technological knowledge, being most valued. Foucault (1995) was seminal in focusing on the relationship between knowledge and power, and argued that institutional power is linked to certain knowledge. Foucault (1995) defined technological, as emanating from 'techne', or practical rationality. The power of technological knowledge, within institutions such as mental health, is not that it is necessarily right, but culturally it counts above other types of knowledge, such as guided interactions with equines.

Browner and Press (1996) refer to this type of technological knowledge as authoritative knowledge whereas they refer to personal knowledge derived from a journey of self discovery, such as the walkabout, as embodied knowledge. Thus, the language we use is influenced by the relationship between power and knowledge, and in particular authoritative knowledge.

Returning to the walkabout to offer further insight into this concept, some lines are available to use by those in certain social positions, and not by others. In relation to application of these terms to GHEI, technological or authoritative knowledge is the specialist knowledge available to the therapist or teacher/facilitator from their professional experience, whilst embodied knowledge is the personal experience gained by a client on their journey of self discovery. In Foucauldian terms, practitioners of GHEI hold power by holding the valued or authoritative knowledge base. This knowledge base may be related to equines, a therapeutic or learning approach, or a specific professional background.

There is of course the horse to reflect on in any considerations of power. It is not known if or how the horse impacts on the power dynamics between teacher/facilitator or therapist/client, but what we do know is that horses have a hierarchical social structure where power is a major factor in their lives too (McGreevy 2004, Mills and Nankervis 2002, Morris 2000). Their power dynamics are also demonstrated through language, but primarily body
language. If an individual horse tries to rise above its own status in a natural herd, the culprit is met with a swift rebuttal such as kick. Youngsters can be excluded from the herd for a period of time. In human terms this amounts to a verbal put down or being ignored. The difference being there is no mistaking the penalties for a transgression of herd society norms. Horses are more direct. In addition, there are no known cultural differences in their communication. As far as we know, horses all over the world appear to use the same language (Morris 2000).

This reflection on the influence of power in the practice of GHEI leads to the fourth principle of constructionism which is reflexivity. According to Burr (2008) reflexivity is a term widely used in social constructionism but can mean a number of different things. Reflexivity can be dated back to the work of Rothman (1997) in the field of conflict resolution. According to Rothman (1997) the term reflexivity includes the concepts of reflection, introspection and the analysis of personal assumptions. In social constructionism these concepts can relate to the impact of the researcher on the research. For example, Davies (1999) refers to reflexivity as a social process where the researcher plays an active role in the production of data based on their personal assumptions. Therefore, there is a need to understand how the researcher is located in the research.

The researcher must analyse their personal assumptions and reflect on how these impact on their choice of methodology, as well as the impact on the conclusions revealed through the interpretative lens of the researcher. It is also worth considering that when a research participant or researcher provides an account, it is not only a description of an event, but it is also part of the event because of the constitutive nature of talk (Burr 1995, Burr 2008).

This shared construction of data calls for a certain level of introspection as well as a public account of self on behalf of the researcher. The public account of self in this thesis began with the inclusion of biographical information about the researcher in the introduction chapter as it relates to this research and concludes in the final chapter.

Reflexivity which arose from this research was recorded in four chronologically ordered journals. Each of these journals contains details of insights, decisions,
development of understanding and questioning of self. It was vital that underlying assumptions held in relation to GHEI and wider contexts were acknowledged so they formed an inherent part of the research process (Porter 1993, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Denzin and Lincoln 1998). For example, the first journal recorded beliefs about GHEI at the start of this research which includes some personal historical context. Extracts from these journals can be found in Appendix 1.

Reflexivity may also be apparent, in part, in this thesis through choice of research question, philosophical underpinning, and theoretical framework. However, there was also a need to construct self, as the researcher into this document, and I have tried to do this through the appropriate use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ at relevant times.

One further way reflexivity is demonstrated throughout this document is through the personal choices made on metaphor use. Use of metaphor is a personal and reflexive process (Lakoff and Johnson 2003). The metaphors used in this thesis account for complex concepts and show the extent to which reflexivity is a fundamental component of research. The use of metaphor to explain the similarities between one thing in relation to another, or analogy, which is used to explain differences, illustrate the personal meaning given by the researcher to complex concepts. This personal meaning can only be achieved through the process of reflexivity. One example of metaphor use in this research is the song lines metaphor which is built upon as the thesis unfolds.

According to McNamee and Gergen (2006) constructionism invites critical self-reflection. This reflexivity provides the opportunity to formulate alternative forms of understanding. Through reflection we can construct different conceptual frameworks but to do this a researcher must turn inwards to reflect on their impact on the research as they design, collect and interpret the data. Thus, the individual on walkabout selects and rejects song lines after reflecting on those that have been made available and deciding what is most in tune for them. They may also reflect on what it was about that song line that made them reject or add it to their repertoire as well as reflecting on how they impacted on the person providing the song lines. If they were looking to
Foucault for influence, they may even question who made the rules about collecting only one song line at each place.

To conclude this section, the four primary principles relating to the constructionist stance adopted for this study have been discussed as separate tenets, yet each of these principles is enmeshed with the others. The analogy of the walkabout and song lines was used to try and illustrate this linkage. The intentions of this section by outlining social constructionism, has been to begin to build the framework for this research.

3.4.3 Social Constructionism and Research

One of the key identifying features of social constructionism is the lack of a specified research process. Hosking (2002) states there are no such thing as social constructionist research methods, only a constructionist thought style. So, the challenge for this study was to undertake rigorous research within a constructionist thought style.

Despite the apparent complexity of constructionism and the overall lack of a specified research methodology, adopting a constructionist framework for this study provided an opportunity for reflection on personal and academic assumptions about knowledge and reality. It also provided a basis for clarifying the links between these assumptions and the subsequent choice of methodology. The primary function of social constructionism, according to Burr (2008 p.3) and Gergen (2009 p.12), is to question the ‘taken for granted’. That is, to be suspicious about the assumptions made about GHEI, and to doubt everything previously accepted as real.

The literature review highlighted that a common link between the many different approaches to researching GHEI was language use where it was taken for granted that GHEI was good for clients. The ensuing debate on constructionism highlighted the relational dynamics of language use in creating meaning. The following section explores some of the linguistic approaches to research to determine the most relevant for this study.
3.5 Alternative Methodologies

Table 7 (on the following page) provides a short comparative analysis of four methodologies linked to language use and a rationale for not using three of them in the context of this research. It also includes a brief rationale for the choice of Discourse Analysis which is then built on in sections 3.6 and 3.7 of this chapter.
Table 7: Alternative Methodologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Concepts/Assumptions</th>
<th>Not used because of the…….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong></td>
<td>To describe lives of individuals and collect individual stories of their experiences (Gay and Airasian 2003)</td>
<td>Individuals learn about themselves and their worlds through the use of narrative/stories. Stories have a specific structure guided by emplotment which highlights the role of actors and the moral messages transmitted by the telling. Analysis can range from a specific structure within a story – how the plot is formed – to how the actors are portrayed, as well as to the wider use of stories within society.</td>
<td>Purpose of Research: often narrative focuses on understanding the perceived reality of individuals, or groups. Especially about events and their own roles within them, rather than social processes per se or the construction of social objects. The purpose of this research was to account for how people construct GHEI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethno methodology</strong></td>
<td>To explain how social actors come to know in common what they are doing and the circumstances in which they are doing it (Heritage 1984)</td>
<td>Social order is built up in everyday communication (Heritage 1984). An assumption in ethnomethodology is that social order is illusory in that it only appears to be orderly but in reality it is chaotic - so social order is only constructed in the minds of the actors. The only way actors make sense of the world is through ‘documentary method’ where social facts are chosen which seem to conform to a pattern. Once the pattern is established, it is used to interpret new facts (Poore 2000). One technique employed in ethnomethodology is to temporarily suspend the world people take for granted and then see how they react. Once the chaos is created, the ethnomethodologist looks to see how order is created (Poore 2000).</td>
<td>Contextual limitations: a fundamental research tool in ethnomethodology is the use of participant observation. Early discussion with practitioners in this research suggested their reluctance to expose clients undergoing therapy to participant observation due to issues around confidentiality, and potential impact of a researcher on the therapeutic outcomes i.e. impact of having a researcher present on the therapist/client. There are ethical considerations involved when filming clients as part of the participant observation. Based on individualism where reality is created in the mind of an individual and is not socially constructed through a shared relational social network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Concepts/Assumptions</td>
<td>Not used because of the ……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Analysis</td>
<td>To describe how conversation makes meaning</td>
<td>Developed from ethnomethodology, conversation analysis assumes that meanings are built up through iterative continuing conversations in which actors build up layers of shared interpretations (Truex 1996). Analysis aims to determine how speech acts in conversation contribute to social rules. Conversation can be viewed objectively, and quantified.</td>
<td>Purpose of Research: the purpose of this research is to account for how GHEI is discursively constructed. The purpose of conversation analysis is to convey how conversation makes meaning by focusing on the sequential utterance by socially structuring features of talk (Denzin and Lincoln (2005)). Conversation analysis does not apply critical thought to the culturally specific discursive resources that have been draw upon. It would not interrogate text to make assumptions explicit. (The song line would be examined for each musical note) Contextual limitations: conversation analysis describes naturally occurring language from a wide range of interactional material. In the context of this research it could have included a conversation between a GHEI practitioner and a client – however ethical limitations apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Concepts/Assumptions</td>
<td>Used because ……</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Discourse Analysis | To show how discourses inhabit texts to enable and constrain what can be said and account for underlying conventions (Parker 1992) | The researcher identifies categories, themes, roles, contradictions and assumptions within the (transcribed) text. The aim is to identify commonly shared discursive resources. The researcher tries to describe how the discourse helps us to give meaning to the subject of study, how people use discourse to maintain or construct a role, and the function of a discourse (what a text does). | Discourse analysis is a way of understanding the social processes such as language use behind GHEI and how we give meaning to the practice of involving equines in therapy and learning. DA assists with making visible the assumptions that enable the existence of GHEI. By making these assumptions explicit, DA will assist with scrutinising GHEI. It will also provide for an account of the researcher in relation to the research. Discourse Analysis will not provide unequivocal answers or a universal truth for practitioners and clients, but will facilitate the asking of ontological and epistemological questions.

This could be achieved through a structuralist approach (nothing exists outside of the song lines) or a post-structuralist approach (what meaning is given to the song lines).

The above concepts are discussed in further detail in the remainder of this chapter. |
The challenge in comparing these alternatives was how to acknowledge the different facets of each single approach. To confine any one of these methodologies to the brief outline provided in table 7 would not do justice to the many authors and expertise inherent in each approach. Yet, an attempt has been made to do just this for ease of reference in justifying the ultimate approach taken in this study. Each of these three methodologies has their own strengths and limitations but the choice of Discourse Analysis was inevitably shaped by three factors:

1. Fulfilling the purpose of the research
2. Contextual limitations, such as ethical considerations
3. Ontological and epistemological assumptions

Ultimately the primary rationale for discourse analysis as the methodology of choice was based on its enmeshment with social constructionism and the focus on the interpersonal processes through which meaning is created. Discourse analysis held the potential to provide an account of the discursive constructions relevant to GHEI.

Cameron (2001) notes the term Discourse Analysis refers both to a body of knowledge about human communication and social reality, as well as to a method of research. For ease of reference, the following section has been subdivided into discourse theories to link what has already been discussed about social construction and language use, discourse analysis as a research term, and a section on analysing discourse. These three sections will look at how discourse theories and discourse analysis complement each other to embrace and build on the social constructionist principles.

### 3.6 Discourse Theories

Discourse theories are concerned with how, why, under what conditions, and for what reasons discourses are constructed (Howarth 2000). Although they might have differing definitions of what a discourse actually is, and its function, they all agree that discourses are enacted within a social context. Certain theories are complex and evolved over a lifetime to offer ways of thinking about language use, such as the works of Foucault (1926-1984).
Foucault has been instrumental in shaping contemporary theories of discourse. In this way he has been instrumental in influencing the thinking of the authors that have in turn shaped the research for this thesis.

The section on social constructionism highlighted the interactional aspects involved in the construction of meaning. Discourse theories build on this social context further by suggesting that we do not speak in isolation, but through language that has been made available to us as part of our history and our culture.

Discourse theories can be divided into structuralist and post structuralist theories. Structuralist theories are those developed by Saussure (1857 – 1913) and Levi Strauss (1829 – 1902). They would see the meaning of GHEI to be solely dependent on the relationships between different elements of a system, so, GHEI would be considered an artefact of what is happening more generally in the mental health system. Howarth (2000) suggests that post structuralists are generally considered to be Derrida (1930 – 2004) and Foucault, although he does state that Foucault argued against any label such as post structuralism being attached to him. These two authors would see the meaning of GHEI to be shaped by social practices and historical rules, where power and discourse are enmeshed. For post structuralists, rules enable us to produce statements, concepts and strategies which together constitute discourses (Howarth 2000). Returning again to the metaphor of song lines, structuralists would see they would only be offered one line at any one place, whilst post structuralists would be offered a choice, but from song lines which were appropriate to their position in a hierarchy. Post structuralists would not be interested in which was the ‘true’ song line, such as GHEI or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) but with the rules that govern CBT discourse being more powerful than GHEI discourse. Post structuralists would ask which discourse is supported by the utilities of knowledge such as academia, publications, funding, buildings, staffing, and the National Health Service, and which is viewed with some scepticism.

Burr (2008 p.11) states that the terms post structuralism and post modernism can be used interchangeably. A commonality between them is that they both offer a way of understanding the social world, and both reject the idea of an ultimate social truth. The research for this thesis uses the term post
modernism where appropriate, as it is concerned with the wider context of the
discursive construction of GHEI and the assumptions and rules that inform that
construction.

To move from theories of discourse to discourse analysis as applied to
research requires a definition of a discourse. It is worth noting at this point
that linguists refer to discourse in the singular, whilst social theorists talk
about discourses. Cameron (2001) believes this plural usage reflects the
influence of Foucault.

3.7 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis has come to mean many things for many people, and there
is a bewildering variety of approaches that go under the heading of discourse
analysis (Parker et al. 1999). It is also an umbrella term for a range of analytical
emphases (Nikander 2006). Notwithstanding, one thing they all have in
common is the perspective that discourse is language use enmeshed with
historical, cultural and social practices. In addition, there is a common
understanding that we do not use language indiscriminately or without reason
(Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997).

There are two contemporary schools of discourse analysis relevant to
psychosocial studies (Ballinger 1999). These are the Manchester and the
Loughborough schools. Ballinger (1999) provides an insight into the contrasts
between the two schools and the differing focus and objectives. This suggests
that whilst the Loughborough School has a reliance on detailed transcription
focusing on the structure of text in order to identify recurring patterns, the
Manchester school is more interested in dominant discourses which reveal new
constructions. In relation to this thesis, the focus is on the dominant
discourses which inform the meaning given to GHEI. Whilst this might in some
part be an over simplification of the two approaches, it does provide a starting
point for rationalising the ultimate approach taken in this research. This
involves a heavier focus on the Manchester school but combines certain
elements of the Loughborough. For example, I was interested in the recurring
patterns of meaning, or threads in discourses (Loughborough), as well as the
relationship between discourses, such as cultural discourses, as well as the meaning given to discourses (Manchester).

Ballinger (1999) concluded that the schools are not mutually exclusive in terms of having to strictly follow one or other. This is supported by Burr (1995, 2008) who believes different approaches can be synthesised. Nikander (2006 p.6) looked at the common features between different approaches and deduced that a commonality is in the researcher looking at how social life and institutional practices are constructed.

3.7.1 Definition of Discourses

A definition of discourses was provided by Parker (1992 p. 5) as ‘a set of statements which construct an object’. Parker (1992) goes on to state, that to identify a discourse, it has to be supported by conditions that include:

- Being realised in texts,
- Containing subjects,
- Delivering a coherent system of meanings,
- Referring to other discourses,
- Reflecting on its own way of speaking,
- Being historically located.

According to Parker (1992), discourses do not simply describe the social world, they categorise it by bringing phenomena into sight. Bringing hidden phenomena, or assumptions, into sight was an important component of accounting for the assumptions inherent in the discursive construction of GHEI.

It is important to recognise that discourses are multi-modal. Therefore the conditions offered by Parker to support a discourse must account for discourses relayed outside of texts, such as graphic images and pictures. However, it could be argued the written word is itself a visual representation we give meaning to. For example, Hawthorn (1992 p.189) defines a discourse as a message ‘encoded in its auditory or visual medium’. Carter (2009) notes that whilst a photograph on one level is a visual medium produced through the
chemical action of light on paper, it is also a medium where the physical entity is directly linked to the concept or emotion conveyed by the image. Or, to look at this concept another way by returning to Parker’s (1992) condition of being realised in texts, pictures send messages that construct a graphic image. Parker (1992 p.6) describes texts as ‘delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form’ and gives an example of the graphics on a games console constructed through a Christian discourse. These tissues of meaning could be reproduced in the graphics contained in websites, books and leaflets about GHEI.

The definition of discourse and supportive conditions offered by Parker (1992) reflects the influence of Foucault, who has been instrumental in the development of discourse analysis in both the Manchester and Loughborough schools, but is particularly influential in the Manchester School (Ballinger 1999). Foucault (1972 p 42) defined discourses as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. In this way discourses can be seen as something that produces something else within a particular context (Mills 1997).

Foucault (1995) viewed power as a network of interacting forces, so GHEI may be viewed as a non dominant discourse within the context of statutory mental health service provision. It may also be tolerated rather than totally rejected by mainstream mental health, as it provides a target to sustain the dominant discourse of statutory mental health delivery through a process of medical hegemony. Power here then is not necessarily planned to create oppression of GHEI, but it does have a direct role in influencing the discourses that may be used. According to Foucault (1990 p.95) ‘where there is power there is resistance’. An increased understanding of power in GHEI not only has the potential to widen the debate on the involvement of horses in therapeutic style interactions, but to explain the rules, assumptions and conventions underlying how GHEI is discursively constructed.

Neither of these schools provides a structured research methodology. Instead they offer research guidelines. For example, Parker (1992) offers 20 guidelines whilst Potter and Wetherell (1987) offer a ten stage approach. Neither approach is intended to be a method nor even sequential. Indeed, Potter and Wetherell (1987) place a heavy emphasis on intuition. For example, there are no controls
for variables (Burr 1995). In this way discourse analysis is an approach to 
research rather than a technique or a tool.

All of this leads to a theory/practice gap between the abstract theoretical 
elements of discourse analysis outlined in this chapter and its practical 
application as an approach to research. It seems the real challenge is not just 
to understand the complexity of discourse analysis, but to enact a pragmatic 
and systematic method of research that adheres to the ontological principles.

Aside from questioning the dominance of discourse theory informing discourse 
practice, as opposed to discourse practice informing discourse theory, it 
appears the gap exists because very few bridging solutions exist to aide a 
researcher new to discourse analysis. Therefore, it seems analysing discourses 
has to be practiced in order to gain insight into the theory. It is only by doing 
discourse analysis that any level of skill can be acquired. There is a challenge 
involved in providing directions on the process by verbal or written instruction 
alone. It may be the heavy emphasis on intuition proposed by Potter and 
Wetherell (1987) which equates to a researcher having to find their own bridge 
on this walkabout.

The work of Ballinger and Cheek (2006) provide one bridging solution to 
encourage researchers to connect theory and practice which is discussed in 
more detail in section 3.8. Ballinger and Cheek (2006) are careful to caution 
against the methodological perils involved in not connecting theory and 
practice.

3.8 Strategy for Analysis

In a doctoral thesis, a section on data analysis would usually be situated in a 
separate methods chapter. However, in this thesis there are three method 
sections for each of the three studies. As the strategy for analysis was the 
same for all three of those studies, discussion on the strategy is included here 
to avoid replication.
As identified in section 2.2, the practice of GHEI does not sit squarely within one academic discipline. It covers an eclectic range, such as occupational therapy, sociology, psychology, nursing, psychiatry, psychotherapy, teaching animal behaviour, and counselling.

Ballinger (1999), Ballinger and Payne (2000a, 2006b), Finlay and Ballinger (2006) and Ballinger and Cheek (2006) situate their discursive research approach with the field of allied health professionals. Situating GHEI in a discursive framework designed to aide allied health professionals acknowledges the range of practice taking place in GHEI, whilst taking into account the emphasis placed in the literature reviewed on mental health, therapy, and psychotherapy. The specific approach outlined by and Ballinger and Cheek (2006) for analysing the texts is to interrogate the data by asking questions of the texts. The term interrogation conveys a more in depth and critical approach to data than analysis alone. It implies a further depth to analysis whereby first impressions formed by the researcher are also questioned. Interrogation implies a level of questioning and reflexivity that the term analysis alone can not account for.

Questioning of texts is given further credence through the work of Fairclough (1996). Widdowson (1995) claims discursive researchers rarely acknowledge that texts can be interpreted in different ways, however Fairclough (1996) refutes this argument. He believes it denies the social construction of interpretation. The point for Fairclough (1996) is not that texts are interpreted through one particular lens, but that the functions of texts are questioned. It is therefore the questioning or interrogation of discourses to determine their function, rather than interpretation, that is central to how discursive research is ultimately constructed and presented. The research for this thesis will question the functions of the discourses involved in the construction of GHEI.

The first step to developing a strategy for analysis included the questioning framework devised by Ballinger and Cheek (2006). This is provided in table 8.
Table 8: Discursive Framework for Interrogating Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What is the dominant discourse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How is this discourse maintained?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Are there contesting discourses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How the version of reality the discourses maintain mesh with does discourses in other contexts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What kind of world is conjured up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What kinds of people are present in the world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How about people least likely to be associated with this world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What are the important things, ideas and/or tasks in the sort of world created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What connotations does this particular word have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Where does this discourse locate guided human equine interactions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>How will this location affect the way these interactions are viewed by clients, professionals and others?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Based on Ballinger and Cheek 2006)

This framework was adopted following early trials with two other discursive frameworks. One was the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) framework (Young and Fitzgerald 2006) which proved challenging to apply by a researcher new to discourse analysis. Questions such as who are the participants resulted in descriptive accounts. The participants in GHEI tend to be practitioner, horse and client.

The second framework was based on the principles involved in critical discourse analysis from work by authors such as Wodak (1996). Questions such as who in this discourse is acting on whom and therefore has the power? place a heavy emphasis on politics and power. This is not to negate any acknowledgement of power and politics in the following studies, but at the outset of the research, overt political implications of GHEI were not the primary focus. However, as the studies unfolded it was realised that inherent assumptions in the data about power and knowledge could not be ignored.

Notwithstanding, the structured approach offered by Ballinger and Cheek (2006) offered an opportunity to explore power as a fundamental component of discourses, without it being the primary focus. The basis of this framework is in exploring the assumptions involved in the discourses, the relationships
and tensions between discourses, the functions of those discourses, and where those discourses ultimately situate GHEI. In this way the questioning of discourses were consistent with the definition of discourses provided by Parker (1992) as delivering a coherent system of meanings on GHEI. For example, discourses referring to other discourses (Parker 1992), is contained within question 4 of the discursive framework relating to meshing and contesting with other discourses. Discourses containing subjects (Parker 1992) is contained within question 6 of the discursive framework relating to kinds of people.

Ballinger and Cheek (2006) provided the basis of the analytical strategy for this thesis, but there were also other criteria that helped inform the analysis to build upon their questioning framework. The following criteria were used in the strategy to determine the primacy of a discourse in a text:

- Technical language used
- Emphasis placed upon a discourse within the text
- The frequency of occurrences of the discourse

A further part of the strategy was to draw on Parker’s (1992) definition of discourses and not approach topics in the texts in the abstract. The discourses were to be interpreted according to their social intention. An example of this approach involved a strategy of looking at the function of each discourse and the roles played by each of the agents in that discourse to maintain it.

The approach to analysis advocated by Gill (1996 p. 144) was also incorporated into the strategy. This included making the familiar strange to help with questioning such as *what kind of world is conjured up by the texts.* Through this approach, new perspectives and ways of thinking could be generated. The challenge in incorporating this element into the strategy was to be able to question what might appear obvious and natural and stand outside naturalised assumptions to question the function of the discourses involved.

The final part of the strategy included making relevant and sustainable interpretations in ways that added to existing body of analyses, as advised by Nikander (2006). This aided with the questioning such as *where does this discourse locate guided human equine interactions and how will this location*
affect the way these interactions are viewed by clients, professionals and other. An example of this can be seen in Chapter Six where findings from a discursive study by Miloni (2007) into office based counselling were used to contrast and inform analysis and interpretation in the Client Study (section 6.3.6).

3.9 Rationale for Data Sources

This section provides an explanation for the data sources selected to generate the data required, in order to provide an account of the discursive construction of GHEI.

Discussions on sampling from a positivist perspective may for instance look to justifying sample size based on numbers of participants. From a discourse analysis perspective however the basis of a sampling strategy is informed by different criteria. Sample size is not usually a significant issue in discourse analysis because the interest is in the way the language is used and not the people using it (Elliot 1996). It also seeks to create valid knowledge through debate and argument rather than generalise through statistical significance. According to Haunschild and Philips (2008) conclusions drawn from a small sample size can be particularly cogent when a case has an extraordinary element. Haunschild and Philips (2008) refer to the work of Siggelkow (2007) as an example to illustrate this. Siggelkow (2007) utilised the metaphor of a talking pig. The response to this particular pig would not be that more talking pigs were needed before it was accepted that talking pigs exist. It might be only one, but it is evidence that a pig can talk. Sample size is further discussed in each of the three studies that make up this thesis.

Standards have not been established to date for an appropriate sample size in discursive studies. However, standards have been established for sample size in conversation analysis where the amount of data generated from lengthy texts is a concern also shared by those undertaking discourse analyses. Boles and Bombard (1998) presented data supporting five to ten minute conversations as adequate sample size in conversation analysis. There are fundamental differences between conversation analysis and discourse analysis,
yet in the case of generating enough data for a meaningful analysis there may be some comparisons equating to the amount of data that can be generated in this time span. However, research that provides in depth examples of different methods and participants is likely to provide knowledge valued more highly than research with a few examples (Ballinger 1999 p.62).

3.9.1 Focus for the Research

From the literature review it can be noted that of the nine quantitative studies reviewed, five of the authors were identified as practitioners. In the remaining four studies the author’s relationship to practice was not stated. Similarly, in the five qualitative studies reviewed, three of the authors were stated practitioners, whilst for the remaining two authors it was unclear as to their practice status. In addition, the range of marketing literature such as websites and leaflets has been prompted by practitioners to promote their practice. The growth of GHEI over a period of five years in the UK, as demonstrated by websites marketing GHEI, rose from five centres in 2005, to 106 in 2010 (table 1).

It can be concluded that practitioners are the primary constructors of GHEI practice. It is practitioners that influence how practice is constructed through how they write and talk to each other about GHEI, through publication of their research and books, through their marketing materials, by training/education programmes, through their contact with other professionals, the general public, as well as through their communications with their clients. Practitioners have a degree of agency to authorise or reject the discursive resources they draw on to construct practice (Burr 2008). In a global environment where discursive resources are shared across continents, such as those shared through USA led organisations and training courses, there is also cultural accounts of GHEI to consider and how these discourses may be adapted and changed to accommodate differing social, historical and cultural contexts.

Therefore, the focus for the research for this thesis commenced with obtaining UK practitioners accounts of GHEI. It followed by exploring GHEI accounts via
website material from the USA and the UK. No research that provides for the meaning given to GHEI would be complete without the voice of the recipients of practice. The third and final study focused on client experiences of GHEI.

3.9.2 Weighting of Research Questions

This focusing of the research involved obtaining varying perspectives on GHEI which may be likened to triangulation of participants. However the implication in triangulation is there is one single location that can be calculated. This returns us to the ontological stance taken in this study where, in social research, the complexity of constructed realities means there is no one location where social truth is fixed. Thus, an approach involving triangulation did not sit comfortably within this thesis.

In order to refine the research primary research question in relation to each of the three studies, a metaphor of a pebble in the pond will be used. This is where each subsidiary research question relating to each of the three studies impacts on the next.

The ripples caused by the pebble dropping in the pond are initiated by the first casting of the primary research question. The ripples travel at a consistent speed until they reach their limits, in this case the boundaries set by the research. They then return to the point where the pebble was dropped. Whilst in some ways it is similar to triangulation it is not about calculating a single social location/truth. This approach can be diagrammatically represented by Figure 1.
The primary research question for the overall thesis is *how is GHEI discursively constructed*. It has already been identified that practitioners of GHEI are the ones with the authoritative knowledge, so are ultimately those who veto information, reproduce and share knowledge through a variety of media, oversee organisations that have developed to share practice, and train others to become practitioners. Therefore, the first study involved practitioners of GHEI in the UK. The research question this study sought to answer was *how do practitioners in the UK discursively construct GHEI?*

In Chapter One it was highlighted that practitioners were turning to a range of sources to acquire their knowledge of GHEI, and where the internet formed a socially specific global community that was easily accessible. It was not clear how this knowledge related to practice in the UK. Therefore, the second study used websites as a data source. This approach was intended to determine the interplay between discourses and culture. The secondary research question this study sought to account for was *how do UK discursive constructions relate to USA constructions on GHEI?*

Finally, it was noted in the literature review there was an absence of client voices. Despite their equal participation in GHEI practice, their embodied knowledge was outweighed by authoritative knowledge in the available literature. Therefore the final study in this thesis asked *what are client constructions of GHEI?*
A final analysis of these three studies was undertaken to look for points where the discourses compared, contrasted, or conflicted. The analysis also identified the function of the discourses. In this way, an account of the discursive construction of GHEI was provided through the exploration of a range of discursive materials and the inclusion of relevant participants.

3.10 Summary of the Methodology

The writing for this document demanded a linear journey. However, it was noted that the research journey was by no means a linear process, rather a scattered process of refinement that required structuring and re-structuring. The reading on methodology and subsequent reflection led to a simultaneous path of critiquing the available research literature whilst reflecting on and formulating the philosophical and theoretical basis of this study. At times throughout the initial chapters of this document that iterative process is apparent as ideas raced backwards and forwards between what was being discovered in the literature and the unravelling of the framework.

Notwithstanding, this chapter has provided an overview of the methodological framework in which the research took place. First it was observed from the literature review that the only commonality in the research was in language use where the language used had consequences for how GHEI was practiced. It was also highlighted that an underlying assumption in existing GHEI research was practice was good for clients. Therefore, a research methodology was required that accounted for language use but which also facilitated exploration of underlying assumptions.

A research framework that facilitated this was social constructionism, where language use is a key principle. A further level of the framework was identified as discourse theory/analysis which in this thesis is closely aligned with constructionism. The practical application of the discursive approach to analysis for this research was based on the work of Ballinger and Cheek (2006).
The chapter concluded with the three specific and secondary research questions that informed the overall research question of how *are guided human equine interactions discursively constructed*?

The methods involved were different for each of the three studies, although the methodology detailed in this chapter is consistent across all the studies. Therefore, the remainder of this thesis consists of reporting on the three studies as three separate chapters. Each of these chapters contains a section on methods as relevant to that particular study. The following chapter is the first of the three studies that accounts for the discursive constructions of practitioners of GHEI in the UK.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRACTITIONER STUDY

4  Rationale for Practitioner Study

The aim of this study is to account for how practitioners in the United Kingdom (UK) discursively construct GHEI. The literature review highlighted only one study emanating from the UK (Burgon 2003) thereby limiting access to existing textual data by UK practitioners. The literature review also acknowledged a wide range of non-standardised but creative ways of putting together horse/human interventions. A commonality in these interventions was the construction of GHEI through the language used by practitioners and/or researchers to account for their implementation.

Chapter Three built on the literature review to show that the language used to account for GHEI is socially constructed within a relational context. In section 3.4.3 it was argued that practitioners of GHEI are the ones with the authoritative knowledge. This is the technical knowledge that holds value in contemporary society. Therefore, it is important to determine how those with the technical knowledge construct practice, including what roles they construct for the client and the horses within their accounts.

The importance of this practitioner study is grounded in escalating practice in the UK despite a limited understanding of the assumptions underpinning practice, or the meanings practitioners give to GHEI.

4.1  Structure of Chapter

This chapter is broken down into two main sections. The first section provides detail on the methods used to achieve the study aim of accounting for how practitioners in the UK discursively construct GHEI.

The second section of this chapter describes the participants and discusses the findings. This section concludes with a summary of the findings, and
exploration of the study limitations. Recommendations for further research have been amalgamated across all three studies and can be found in the Discussion Chapter, section 8.

4.2 METHOD

The following section details the methods used in the Practitioner study. The research process is outlined including information on the research tool employed, ethical considerations, research governance, and recruitment of participants, data collection, as well as data management.

4.2.1 Interviews

A key factor was to elicit discourses by UK practitioners that would allow the researcher to provide an account for how they discursively construct GHEI. In view of the much wider practice taking place in the USA relative to the limited practice in the UK, a challenge for this study was to elicit data that emanated from the UK alone.

The focus given to language use meant that documentary sources were one data generating method of choice. However, this was limited in the UK at the time of the commencement of this study. There were no existing governing bodies that could provide access to data such as minutes of meetings, guidance on practice, or training schedules. Although one UK web forum did exist, postings emanated from Europe, Africa, Australia and the USA. The majority of the postings were from those interested in GHEI and not necessarily practitioners.

A study involving observation of GHEI sessions to generate data was a consideration. However, aside from the practical challenges of recording all the participants in a large arena or field with a herd of horses, there were also the ethical implications of recording therapeutic style sessions for research purposes.
A further data collection tool, defined as a qualitative research tool, involves dialogue between a researcher and a small number of participants in order to explore their perspectives on a particular topic (Boyce and Neale 2007). They can be conducted in a group setting or an individual setting. Group interviews would have provided an opportunity to facilitate in depth discussions with practitioners, as well as being time, resource, and cost effective (Kreuger 1988, Berry 1999). However, power dynamics within a group could have resulted in only the loudest voices being heard. It was important for this study that each participating practitioner had an equal voice and thus provided an individualised account. Therefore, individual interviews were considered the preferable tool in this study as respondents could use their own language (Bowling 1997, Loffland and Loffland 1995) and not be influenced or distracted by others seemingly with more knowledge or influence.

Whilst interviews are acceptable tools within the general qualitative field of research, there is some debate about their relevance in discursive studies. A point of debate between the Manchester and Loughborough schools of discourse analysis is in their acceptance of interviews as a legitimate form of discourse. The Loughborough School of discourse analysis perceives interviews as staged interaction where the power dynamics between the researcher and the researched influences the language used (Wetherell and Potter 1992). From this perspective, interviews are not seen as naturally occurring discourses. What is not addressed is what actually defines naturally occurring discourse as Parker (1992) argues; political debate often involves staged interaction between interviewer and respondent. Yet, this is exactly the type of textual data that discourse analysis is commonly applied to.

By contrast, the Manchester School perceive texts as objects (Parker 1992) regardless of how the text is obtained, whilst acknowledging that reflexivity in this process must play a part. Justification for this stance can be found in discourse studies that have used interviews. Ballinger (1999) made use of interviews in her research on falls and falling in elderly people, and Barker (2003) used interviews with young Goths to account for their perceptions of their own subculture and their identities within it. These are just a few examples of studies where valued knowledge can emanate from discursive studies based on interview data.
Despite these differences of opinion, both schools agree interviews form a social relationship between the researcher and the researched (Wetherell and Potter 1992). Nikader (2006) believes this social relationship, or interaction, is an important consideration. This applies to this practitioners study when considering what questions should be asked of practitioners in an interview and what should be excluded. So, despite interviews being a powerful tool for data collection (Berry 1999), as well as being considered open, adaptable, and flexible (Burns and Grove 1993), there are challenges to be addressed. The question for this study in particular was how to construct an interview without constraining practitioner discussions on GHEI. The development and piloting of an interview schedule is discussed later in section 4.2.6.1.

4.2.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were established in keeping with good research practice and included how participants could be accessed and the ethics inherent in the research process. Ethical approval for both the practitioner and a subsequent client study was granted by the School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Science Ethics Committee in July 2006 (Appendix 2 for letter of ethical approval). This is now the School of Health Sciences.

4.2.2.1 Access to Participants

Access to potential participants was provided via three organisations (see Appendix 3 for letters of collaboration). These were the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association based in Utah in the USA who held details of UK practitioners who had trained with them, the UK web based forum Equine Assisted Therapy, (www.equineassistedtherapy.org.uk) and Etain. Etain is an organisation that had recently been set up in the UK to promote equine assisted learning and at that time was in the early stages of training teachers and educators. Recruitment methods will be outlined in section 4.2.5.

Those who expressed an interest to participate were informed of the nature and purpose of the research that they had the right to terminate their
involvement at any stage as well as to negotiate their input if they later had concerns about what they had said. Each participant was told they had the right to leave the interview at any point or to decline to answer a question. They were assured their identities would be preserved. Any identifying data would not be published or used for dissemination at conferences, reports, publications, or writing of this thesis.

They were assured audio recordings would be kept in a secure environment and only played with the researcher and/or supervisors present. Thereafter, recordings would be kept in secure and locked storage for a period of 15 years following the conclusion of the research according to the University of Southampton data protection policy. Following this period the recordings would be destroyed. Audio clips would not be used for dissemination. Further, they were informed that transcribed data from the interviews would be stored securely in a passworded computer database and include the use of coding such as pseudonyms alongside the removal of identifiers. Identifiers such as birthdates and post codes were not collected.

The participants were advised that guarantees of confidentiality would be honoured unless there were clear reasons for over riding this, such as child or vulnerable adult protection. This was made clear to the practitioners at the outset of the informed consent process. It was also made clear that the researcher would act in accordance with her professional conduct guidance.

The ethical guidelines included the course of action the researcher should take should any distress become apparent during the course of an interview. The researcher is a qualified nurse, midwife and has been an adolescent therapist with a Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Therefore, signs and symptoms of potentially escalating distress would have been acknowledged and appropriate action taken to minimise negative emotional outcomes. If distress had been overt, then the guidelines stipulated the audio recording was to be stopped and an attempt made to ameliorate any distress by comforting the participant. Only if the practitioner provided permission for the session to continue thereafter, would the interview continue, with the researcher making a decision as to the appropriateness of continuation. If signs of tiredness were observed a comfort break was to be offered. Details of onward support were provided should the participant require this.
The practitioners chose where and when their interview was to take place in order for them to feel comfortable in their surroundings and environment. Refreshments were provided as appropriate.

4.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 9 lists the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Practitioner of GHEI defined as an individual who has a professional background such as a teacher or a mental health specialist and who has undergone a specific course of training in at least one form of GHEI or had more than two years experience of working in the field.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signed informed consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>Practitioner/s working for the NHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to communicate in English as no access to translators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practitioner does not agree to audio recording of interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in simultaneous similar research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rationale for excluding National Health Service (NHS) practitioners was based on the requirement for further ethical approval outside of the University should NHS personnel be recruited. It was known at the time of acquiring University ethical approval that only one practitioner in the UK was based within the NHS as part of a mental health team. Therefore, the time involved in obtaining further ethical approval was considered an inefficient use of time and resources when there was no guarantee that particular practitioner would volunteer to participate.
4.2.4 Research Governance

Regulation of research practice exists in the United Kingdom in order to ensure safety and quality in research. The aim of regulatory standards is to minimise risk, safeguard participants and ensure ethical and scientific quality (Department of Health 2005). Although the term ‘scientific’ is not defined within this context, Research Governance offers standards and principles for all researchers to follow to ensure their practice is sound and ethical. This study followed the Research Governance guidelines set down by the Department of Health (2005). Appendix 4 contains a copy of the signed agreement for research governance sponsorship by the University of Southampton, which was issued following ethical approval.

4.2.4.1 Professional Indemnity

Professional indemnity was provided by the University of Southampton (refer to Appendix 4)

4.2.4.2 Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment of the proposed research was undertaken, along with a plan of action to minimise identified risks. This risk assessment and accompanying action plan can be found in Appendix 2. Issues such as personal safety are covered in this document.

Although the research did not directly involve animals, horses were a fundamental focus of the overall research. They would be discussed within the interview format, and it was possible they would be observed by the researcher outside of the planned interview if an interview took place at a stable yard. Equine ethical guidelines were therefore established within the risk assessment (Appendix 2).
The study did not contravene the Scientific Procedures Act (1986) which is related to the involvement of animals in scientific research.

4.2.5 Recruitment of Participants

Practitioners of GHEI come from many diverse backgrounds, so the intention was to recruit from as wide a range as possible. In this way practitioners could bring their existing authoritative knowledge. The concern in recruiting from just one professional background, such as psychotherapy, would be that it may have resulted in limited language and would not have been reflective of the range of practice taking place.

The intention was to recruit a purposive sample of ten practitioners with a range of professional backgrounds to participate in the interviews. This sample size was justified by the limited amount of practitioners actually working in the United Kingdom, as well as by the quota matrix that included diversity in the professional background of the practitioners (table 10). At the time of application for ethical approval of the study (2006), there were nine centres in the United Kingdom known to be practising some form of GHEI. This included four organisations for people with addictions, one centre for people with a severe and enduring mental illness, one establishment for children who had been fostered, two practitioners working with referrals for a mental health team, a unit for children with behavioural challenges, and an independent practitioner. Whilst the exact number of GHEI practitioners across the UK was not known, there were 28 practitioners registered with EAGALA.

A sample matrix was established from a review of the UK web forum and available literature to determine likely professional backgrounds of practitioners in the UK. This included teachers, therapists, nurses, social workers, complimentary practitioners, occupational therapists, equine specialists, and mental health practitioners such as psychologists. The aim of recruiting practitioners from different backgrounds was to account for the varying professional discourses under which GHEI is constructed. Any given account could have been shaped by the participant’s previous integration into
a specific professional community. Therefore, it was important to gain a cross representational sample of professional backgrounds involved in GHEI. The following table demonstrates the professional backgrounds hoped for in the sample matrix in table 10.

Table 10: Professional Backgrounds for Sample Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse specialist (Natural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse specialist (BHS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was hoped that at least one practitioner from each of these professional backgrounds would volunteer to participate in the study in relation to any professional discourse they might draw on. Within this sample a mix of gender, novice and experienced practitioners, diverse background experience with equines as well as therapeutic activities, and practitioners from different geographical locations, were expected. The major limitation involved in this approach was the uncertainty that a clear cross section of practitioners could be achieved because of the limited number of practitioners in the UK.

Practitioners were approached through postings on the websites of the three collaborating organisations and through research information being made available via a poster at a GHEI conference in the UK. Practitioners were asked to volunteer to take part in an interview for this study and were asked to contact the researcher direct. Once contact was made, they were screened verbally for the stated inclusion and exclusion criteria and if they met the requirements they were provided with further information on the study. This was sent via post or email. The information sheet can be found at Appendix 5 along with the consent form. Written consent was obtained through the post,
and a date, time and venue were set for the interview. Contact details were exchanged to provide an opportunity for the participant to decline participation or cancel a scheduled appointment at any point prior to the interview.

### 4.2.6 Data Collection

Data collection took place over a five month period from March to July 2007. This time period allowed for two participants to be interviewed each month, provided for advance notification to be scheduled into diaries, for travel arrangements to be made, transcripts to be typed up in between interviews, and analysis to commence.

#### 4.2.6.1 Designing the Interview Schedule

The design of interviews tends to range from the more informal conversational type of interview where there are no predetermined questions asked by the researcher to the more formal closed response survey style (Bowling 1997). In between these two poles there is a general guide interview that can be equated with the semi structured interview. This general guide approach was intended to ensure that each participant is involved in discussing the same topic rather than specific question. This approach allowed for a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability whilst remaining focused (Valanzuela and Shrivastava 2006). A certain level of structure was established through topic headings rather than pre-ordained questions.

This approach was considered important for this study for two reasons. Firstly, there was the need for practitioners not to be rigidly constrained in any structure so they could voice their language use. The second reason was the need for some structure to assist with the social collaborative process between the researcher and the researched. The concern was, that without any boundaries in place, I would place too much of myself into the interviews by reverting to interactional social norms. There was also a concern I would be seen by the participants to be abdicating the ‘research interview role’ by not
directing the process. For example, Steward (2006 p. 39) describes how she used unstructured interviews and her participants described feeling ‘uncomfortable with giving a rambling account’. They wanted some direction.

A pilot interview schedule was developed with the intention of providing some structure and guidance. Only topic headings were developed. During the early process of developing the interview schedule, a genogram was included as part of the interview in order to provide a structure for practitioners to talk about their practice, clients, and horses. The genogram is a method of quick and structured data collection on interpersonal dynamics used by mental health practitioners. The original intention was to use these to see if any social interactional patterns could be established as part of the discourses. However, when piloting it with friends and family prior to piloting it with practitioners, it was noted that there were only a finite number of possible interactions between practitioner, and horse/s, and client/s. Therefore, the genogram was dropped from the initial pilot interview schedule.

The resulting pilot interview schedule was designed with topic headings intended to take the practitioner on a linear and chronological journey from their earliest recollection of horses and their ensuing experiences of equines through to their background profession, then onto where/when they first heard about guided human equine interactions and how they came into GHEI practice. They were then asked to consider what is was that was different about their previous role as a professional and their current role with the horses and what is was about the horse that helped them with this role. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate their practice by offering an account of what they felt clients possibly took away from the sessions.
4.2.6.2 Conducting the pilot interviews

Pilot interviews took place in January and February 2007. Piloting the interview schedule offered an opportunity to stage a testing with practitioners, become familiar with the equipment, check the feasibility of the various components of the topic schedule and determine how the questions were received. Two practitioners who were part of the sample who originally volunteered for inclusion in the study were approached and asked to participate in the pilot. Fourteen individuals from across the country had responded to the request for participation in the research. More than two practitioners from the same professional background participating in the pilot would have depleted the remaining available sample.

I attended a five day course on the design, conduct and analysis of qualitative research using in depth interviews at the National Centre for Social Research. This course assisted with the development of a level of confidence required to undertake the interviews. During the course, we were given an opportunity to test our interviewing skills whilst being observed and assessed. Critical feedback from these sessions helped develop practice and facilitate the probing techniques that are a requirement of this tool. In addition, a peer group was formed throughout the five day programme that continued to offer support long after the conclusion of the course.

The initial concern for the two pilot interviews was on introductions. I was uncertain if I should introduce myself as a researcher, as someone trained in equine assisted psychotherapy but not practising, as an adolescent health specialist, or as a nurse and midwife. Each one of these roles held implications for data obtained and also implications relating to power dynamics. When discussing the interviews with a group of non participating practitioners outside of the United Kingdom, they felt an introduction detailing all four roles offered an honest and transparent opening.

The schedule was intended to be as flexible and adaptable to the interview situation as possible. It opened with a statement that thanked the participant
and outlined the purpose of the research, consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, duration of interview, withdrawal, recording, and opportunity for asking questions. From the first pilot interview it was noted that the practitioner focused solely on the positive elements of their practice. Therefore, an extra heading was added to the schedule which asked what could be negative about GHEI. The final interview schedule included eight topic headings as detailed in table 11.

Table 11: Topic Headings for Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Headings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First experience of horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past experiences with therapy, learning, and horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First heard about guided human equine interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How came to practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What way the work with the horses is different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it about the horse as a species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of what clients take away from the sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances in which they would not use GHEI or have negative effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A personal issue during these two pilot interviews was the internal tension I experienced during the interview process. This involved the challenge of trying not to enter therapist role but to stay as a curious researcher of social processes. This became all the more important as participants in the pilot study disclosed personal information that could have led to a therapeutic style session.

At times during the pilot interviews I was asked to comment on an issue. This could certainly have been one of the complications in a more open ended style interview format. Therefore, it was decided that for the remainder of the study it would be explained at the outset that any outstanding questions would be addressed after the interview had been completed when a debriefing could take place.
I tried to ensure good practice in asking probing questions (Berry 1999). This included questions that were short and devoid of jargon (Kvale 1996), singular (Patton 1987), open ended (Patton 1987), sequenced such as experience before feeling, and general before specific (Cohen and Manion 1994). It also included linking, puzzling (being curious), challenging, encouraging, acknowledging, procuring further detail, and allowing time for elaboration (Berry 1999). In keeping with Kerlinger (1970), questioning of motives took place. Participants were asked for examples (Boyce and Neale 2007). Interruptions were kept to a minimum and periods of silence allowed time for the participant to reflect on their thoughts. At appropriate times their last response was paraphrased to allow for clarification to take place.

Both practitioners in the pilot were asked to feedback on the specific questions asked, alongside their ease of understanding the wording and how they felt when responding. They were also asked to comment on how the interview had been approached, the level of rapport, and if they felt they had been led in any way. Finally they were asked if they could offer some constructive advice on improvement. Both practitioners felt they had enjoyed the experience, more so as they previously had little opportunity to talk in depth about their practice. They felt the opportunity the research afforded them for this alone was cathartic. It seemed these two practitioners had little opportunity to discuss GHEI in the UK and had welcomed the process, whilst I had realised the language practitioners used were likely to involve a richness and complexity of accounts.

The recorded interviews were shared with the supervisors of this thesis who assisted with providing feedback on the development of the pilot, as well as interview style. No data from the pilot interviews has been included in the final analysis.
4.2.6.3 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews took place from March 2007 to July 2007. Ten practitioners in total were interviewed, each from a different professional background. Further details of the practitioners are provided in section 4.3 of this chapter.

Interviews took place in Cornwall, Gloucester, Norfolk, Scotland, Sussex, Devon, and Wiltshire. Interview venues included the participant’s home, place of work, a hay barn, side room in a public house, and a quiet restaurant. All venues were assessed prior to use for privacy and safety by the researcher and/or the participant. Two interviews had to take place via a telephone recording system due to limitations in practitioner availability. Practitioners provided consent to recording these telephone interviews.

Opdenakker (2006) in a critique of telephone interviews argued that although some social cues may be missed in the interaction, enough cues remain for telephone interviews not to be too much of a problem. I did not think the lack of face to face interaction detracted from the quality of data obtained. Without the distraction of body language, these appeared to be the easiest interviews to conduct. The close body proximity involved in face to face interviewing resulted in less personal detachment than could be obtained in telephone interviews. However, periods of silence in the telephone interviews were more disconcerting as there was no visual feedback to provide additional context.

The two telephone interviews yielded discussions that took place in a free flowing manner with the researcher picking up points of relevance as appropriate. However, as these two interviews took place after the face to face interviews and protracted contact with the participant in trying to arrange suitable time/venue, it may have had more to do with the evolving skill and confidence in applying the interview format. Notwithstanding, one of the telephone interviews resulted in the longest recording. The earlier interviews tended to last around 30 to 40 minutes whilst the later interviews were around 70 minutes.
4.2.7 Data management

Seven of the interviews were recorded digitally and then downloaded into the software programme Digital Voice Editor, where they were transcribed into a word document by hand and through the use of a foot pedal to control the speed of diction. The first three interviews were recorded on audio tape which had to be manually scrolled through. This process was time consuming, mainly because the audio tapes had less clarity than the digital recordings.

The computerised qualitative data management system QSR:NUDIST was initially considered for analysis purposes. However, after undergoing initial training on this system, it appears the software may be less relevant for research involving a limited number of interviews and transcripts. Attendance at the National Centre for Social Research data analysis course inspired the use of Excel spreadsheets as an appropriate data management tool for this study. Data from an interview could be separated into sections within the spreadsheet with each section equating to a particular participants dominant discourses.

4.2.7.1 Transcripts

The transcripts provided the data required to explore the discourses used by practitioners in GHEI. Each interview took on average between four and six hours to transcribe. The transcripts did not include pause lengths and intonations. They were verbatim records of the interview including verbal utterances such as ‘yeah’ “ah” and ‘um’. The grammar in the transcripts was not corrected. Double spacing and pagination was used throughout and inaudible words appear as **** in the text. The researcher’s questions were recorded on a separate line in bold.

New paragraphs were included when the participant or researcher introduced a new topic. Where it was unclear where a sentence ended and begun a written recording was made that appeared to represent the spoken words as closely as possible. Each line of the transcribed interview was provided with a line
number for ease of reference. Each transcript was coded according to the participant's professional background and the order of the interview.

### 4.2.8 Data Analysis

Within constructionism, there is an acknowledgement that there will be a period of time when there is an inability to move forward with the research. Burr (1998 p.14) terms this ‘personal paralysis’. Burman and Parker (1993) and Gill (1995) also recognise a limitation of a critical realist approach to research is in its paralyzing effect. This personal paralysis happened whilst I was reflecting on the initial data gathering process during the data collection stage. There was a realisation of an unlimited number of reconstructions possible from the given accounts. Within each of these possible accounts there was the potential for misinterpretation. This was enough stimuli to evoke a sustained period of personal paralysis. However, as my understanding of how discourses call on certain subject positionings evolved, so this particular challenge became irrelevant (see section 6.3.1.1 for a more detailed analysis of subject positionings).

The ten interview transcripts were initially interrogated individually using the analytical approach outlined in the previous chapter. Results from these individual interrogations were then aggregated into a multi voice reconstruction so an interpretative analysis could take place across all ten transcripts. Findings from this analysis are to be found in the next section of this chapter where verbatim quotes from the interviews are provided in italics.

### 4.3 FINDINGS

The following section details the findings from the analysis of the practitioner interviews. The first part of this section provides descriptive details of the practitioners involved in the study. Following this, the second part of this section is structured according to the eleven questions provided by Ballinger and Cheek (2006) to interrogate the texts (see section 3.8 and table 7).
4.3.1 Practitioner Details

Ten practitioners participated in the study, seven female and three male. All were Caucasian. Length of time working within some form of GHEI ranged from eighteen months to twenty-two years. All practitioners worked with both individual clients and groups. This generally, although not always, involved more than one session. A session could last anything from an hour to a day. Some practitioners worked within a set number of sessions, whilst other practitioners worked longer term with clients. Five practitioners worked only with adults and five practitioners worked mainly, but not exclusively, with children and young people.

Each of the practitioners had come into GHEI practice through different professional backgrounds. Table 12 shows the sample matrix that was established as part of the methodology for ensuring a cross representation of practitioners in comparison to the professional background of actual participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Matrix</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary Practitioner</td>
<td>Complimentary Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapist</td>
<td>Child Psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse specialist (Natural)</td>
<td>Natural horse trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse specialist (BHS)</td>
<td>British Horse Society Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Mental Health Nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The original sample matrix included a psychologist and a psychotherapist. However, no practitioners from these specific professional backgrounds
volunteered to take part in the research. Notwithstanding, a psychiatrist, and a facilitator with an education background were included in the study whose professional backgrounds were not part of the original sample matrix. This still resulted in ten practitioners from differing professional backgrounds such as equine professions, social and health care services, complimentary practice, and educational experience. Four of the practitioners who participated in the research had some educative element to their professional background such as teaching or training. Practitioners had worked in their specific background profession for a period from five to 27 years.

The following provides a descriptive account of the practitioners in order to help contextualise the eventual interrogation and analysis. This is supported by verbatim texts extracted from the data.

All but one practitioner had physical, positive, and ongoing contact with horses from a young age. The first memory of equines recorded by nine practitioners was generally around three to four years of age. At this age the practitioners would have already been formulating their language on horses:

‘When I was about three or four and I remember my mum taking me down to them and sitting on a pony in their field’ (Social Worker)

‘I was just 18 months to two years old and was sat on the front of the saddle with me mother behind me’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

This positive contact with horses at a formative age appears to have led to enduring human–horse relationships. The relationships were based on obsession, passion, and a general love of horses during childhood and beyond:

‘I just came out obsessed with horses and finally managed to drag my parents into riding lessons when I was four I think’ (Teacher)

‘Well, yes, being passionate about the horses’ (Occupational Therapist)

‘I have always had a love of horses’ (Counsellor)

All of the practitioners had additional contact with horses outside of their GHEI working environment. Eight practitioners kept their own horse/s and the one practitioner who came to horses later in life was in the processes of purchasing a pony. One practitioner did not own a horse but rode regularly at a local stable. This early and ongoing contact exemplified the emotion that
practitioners expressed when they talked of horses. This talk, as we have seen, was of ‘passion’, ‘obsession’ and ‘love’ and they expressed a concern that life would be ‘empty’ without horses. This style of discourse might be the type humans use to talk about close family members, partners or lovers. Some practitioners did consider the horse their partner, but in a practical sense as in a co-worker. For others the horse was their physical, emotional, and spiritual partner who held special qualities that could benefit clients. These special qualities will be examined in more detail as this chapter unfolds.

Practitioners with a background in health, social care and education felt they naturally moved into GHEI work through their joint involvement with horses and clients. They talked of having practised GHEI informally for some time without naming it as such:

‘I guess it must have been I mean I guess it was even when I lived in (name of city) um whenever that was and I worked in stables there and I guess it was about that stage then that various children would sort of turn up and help out and so, although it wasn’t in a work setting environment I think the way we work with horses where I keep them naturally and all of those principles we were sort of doing that work in a way if you like’ (Social Worker)

Those with an equine professional background came into practice through taking employment at a centre where GHEI was practiced, where their role initially was to care for the horses. The one practitioner who did not have contact with horses from an early age became involved with horses for the first time when he took a post at a centre that delivered GHEI. He described how he became emotional when he watched his first session:

‘I was a sceptic but I remember standing at (name) farm watching what was happening and actually becoming emotional myself watching and thinking there is something in this because of how it made me feel watching it. I thought it must be really wonderful for people who are actually experiencing it’ (Mental Health Nurse)

This practitioner was convinced that GHEI could change lives, and not only for his clients. He too talked of love for horses from this point on, how horses had changed his life, and how he was in the process of purchasing his own pony.

Practitioners talked of a developing insight into the parallels of working with horses and clients. Those with a background of working in the health and social care fields had initially equated their experiences of horses to working
with clients with challenging behaviour. So, they either turned to the internet to find out more about what they felt they intuitively knew, or made contact through their professional networks with someone who already had an interest in GHEI:

‘I started to do some research on the internet because I had got some vague memories of hearing about stuff in the States you know work with prisoners and that kind of thing. It was through research on the internet that I discovered you know what a big area it was in the States and sort of got into it from there’ (Teacher)

The practitioners were able to connect with a wider community of potentially like minded professionals through the internet. This provided them with information on the few USA authored books available on the subject and they were also able to link into workshops, training, and sources of support and guidance. Through these sources of information the practitioners were able to start to formulate their own language of GHEI. In this way they grew from something they felt was innate or intuitive, but inexpressible to become part of a growing international community of people interested in involving horses in therapy and learning. This community, in the USA in particular, had developed their language on GHEI some years previous. Thus, the practitioners involved in this study used a community of practitioners in the USA to acquire information and knowledge.

Six practitioners had undertaken a course of training in GHEI. Three practitioners travelled to the USA to attend a training course with EAGALA. Three other practitioners attended training in the UK. However this was the same training, provided by the same organisation, and delivered by USA trainers.

It is unclear if, or how, the discourses the practitioners used in this study compare to original organisational discourse obtained via the internet, books, workshops and training, or if the practitioners made any cultural adaptations. This organisational language, as the most easily accessible source available to the practitioners, could have had a strong influence on how practitioners here in the UK constructed their practice. This will therefore be explored more in the next study (Chapter Five).
We shall see in the next section of this chapter that the language practitioners used to rationalise the inclusion of horses in their practice was contained within three specific and dominant discourses.

4.4 Presentation of Findings

The following findings are presented according to the questions provided by Ballinger and Cheek (2006) and detailed in the section 3.8, table 7. This framework consists of a series of 11 questions used to interrogate the text, not the participants. The findings from this interrogation are structured according to each of the questions asked of the text. Question one in this framework provides some further extracts from the texts to illustrate the primary discourses, whilst the remaining questions examine these discourses in more detail.

4.4.1 What is the dominant discourse?

This study elicited three dominant discourses that were interwoven throughout all ten interviews. These dominant discourses were identified as:

- Mental distress discourse
- Social discourse
- Metaphysical discourse

There were threads of all three of these discourses running throughout each interview. However, there were differing levels of focus on each individual discourse within each interview. For example, one practitioner’s personal mix of the three dominant discourses may have been more focused on the mental distress discourse than the social or metaphysical discourses, whilst another would be more focused on the metaphysical. Each of the three discourses appeared in the transcribed text of each practitioner, but in varying degrees of dominance.
Thus, a practitioner text consisted of a primary discourse, as in the most central discourse they used, a secondary discourse, and a tertiary discourse as in the least central of the three discourses.

Every practitioner was unique in the way they blended these three discourses together. As we shall see as this chapter progresses, their unique and blended constructions of the three dominant discourses accounted for each practitioner having their own particular and individualised style of practice. Thus, the language a practitioner used influenced their practice and their practice influenced their use of language.

Two of the discourses, the mental distress and social discourses, were overtly apparent due to their use of technical language. The technical language used in the mental distress discourse involved terms such as, ‘patient’, ‘therapy’, ‘treatment’ and ‘mental illness’. It also included medical diagnosis and disorders such as ‘bipolar’, ‘schizophrenia’, ‘anorexia’ and ‘depression’.

Technical language used in the social discourse was centred on socialisation with terms such as ‘community’, ‘culture’, ‘family’, and ‘relationships’. Additional technical language in this discourse related to the outcomes of socialisation such as self esteem and self confidence. However, there was some merging of the mental and the social discourses, where at times in the texts it was hard to differentiate between them. Hence, the mental discourse was labelled as mental distress, which allowed further clarification to take place through focusing on mental dis-ease from the client perspective, rather than the wider field of mental health, or institutional discourse relating to mental illness.

The third discourse, the metaphysical discourse, was more elusive and required detailed consideration to ascertain the precise terminology with which to label it. Each label might have held consequences for GHEI practice into the future. Technical language in this discourse included words such as ‘nature’, ‘spiritual’, ‘natural’, ‘eco’, ‘innate’, ‘intuitive’, and ‘organic’. It was only later in the analysis when the function of the discourses became clearer that the term metaphysical was formed. See Appendix 6 for the connotations of possible terms in labelling the metaphysical discourse. The functions of the discourses are explained later in this chapter in section 4.4.4.
Table 13 details the analysis of the main discourses of each of the individual interviews. Also included is the professional background of the participant and the client group/s they worked with in order to provide further context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses</th>
<th>Participant/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Mental distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental distress</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental distress</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Distress</td>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main primary discourse was social (n=6) and then mental distress (n=3). Only one primary discourse was metaphysical and that was in the account provided by the complimentary practitioner. The main secondary discourse was metaphysical (n=6) followed by social (n=3). The account of the psychiatrist reflected a secondary discourse of mental distress. The main tertiary discourse was mental distress (n=6) followed by metaphysical (n=3). Only one tertiary discourse was social and that was accounted for by the Registered Mental Health Nurse.
It can be seen from table 13 that practitioners did not necessarily provide a primary discourse based on their professional background. For example, the psychiatrist did not provide a primary mental distress discourse. This may have been a concerted attempt on the part of a practitioner to move away from their professional discourse or a recognition that GHEI did not necessarily equate with how they saw their profession in practice.

Considering that four of the participating practitioners had some educational element to their professional background I had expected that education would be a dominant discourse. A discourse pertaining to education and learning was found in the analysis of the interviews, but only in relation to each of the three main discourses and not as a primary discourse in itself. In the social discourse for example, education and learning was apparent through the practitioner’s talk of the experiential learning of social skills through interaction with the horses and people. The educational element of the social discourse had the purpose of facilitating learning of social skills without the use of directives by the practitioner:

‘Oh yeah, its er well what we try to do is take the pressure off yeah its not about putting pressure on people to achieve which is what the clinical psychologists wanted to do and er would try to push people into situations which they weren’t ready for which is dangerous. It would be like putting a horse in a situation which it’s not ready for which is dangerous’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

By contrast, the mental distress discourse had a directive role for the practitioner and for the recipient of the directives, the client. In this discourse the practitioner set up certain situations with the purpose of achieving a desired outcome:

‘When we were planning who the patients were and what the exercise was going to be it was something of a case of I wonder if they will really be able to do this and this will really challenge them’ (Counsellor)

The learning in this particular discourse was not necessarily about client learning, it was about the practitioner learning about the client:

*What I got out of it was who that person really is and that gives me a deeper sense of what their behaviours are what their patterns are and how they actually do interact with other people and how they deal with these when they get angry and frustrated*’ (Counsellor)
For the metaphysical discourse, the education element was seen as client self learning though the horse or through the environment. The role of the practitioner was not to be directive or even facilitative, it was to act as a catalyst for learning to occur and not to interfere in the process:

‘There’s an agent there which is where the therapy is taking pace which isn’t the person yeah so you’re actually the catalyst in that situation and the horse is more what offers the chance for growth and development.’ (Psychiatrist)

The educational and learning elements of the three primary discourses were either facilitative as in the social discourse, directive as in the mental distress discourse, or catalytic as in the metaphysical discourse. Where practitioners located themselves in their texts and the emphasis they placed upon this location, as facilitating, directing, or acting as a catalyst, was a fundamental component in determining which primary discourse a text was allocated. This question of where practitioners were placed in the discourses will be revisited later in this chapter (section 4.4.3 figure 5).

4.4.2 How is this discourse maintained?

The three dominant discourses were maintained through each participant undertaking a specific role within a value base of service delivery and for a stated purpose. In order to understand how each discourse was maintained, a breakdown of the roles of the practitioner, client and horse under each discourse was elicited from the transcribed texts alongside the values underpinning a particular discourse and the stated purpose.

Each discourse is summarised in turn, followed by a more detailed discussion of the roles of practitioner, client, and horse in the discourses.

4.4.2.1 Social Discourse

As the most frequent primary dominant discourse, the findings relating to the roles participants play within the social discourse are summarised in table 14.
Table 14: Summary of Roles in Social Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Discourse</th>
<th>Summary of Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioner role</strong></td>
<td>Paralleling (treating the human and the horse the same)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To give back power and confidence to the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be non authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To model nurturing and caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To normalise the socialisation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To facilitate client social and emotional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To facilitate the equivalent of a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To facilitate social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client role</strong></td>
<td>To develop insight into personal behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To utilise metaphors as and when they arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn about horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be nurturing and caring to the horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To develop self respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To build coping and life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To chat and eat and socialise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be part of an equivalent family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horse role</strong></td>
<td>To model social bonding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be looked after and nurtured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To aide empathy i.e. when a horse is ‘bullied’ by another horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help clients form relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To act as a motivational force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide a focus for social normalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Trust and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Client centred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Improve social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance self confidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these roles will be looked at in more detail in the following section.

4.4.2.1.1 Role of the Practitioner in the Social Discourse

The role of the practitioner in the social discourse was to facilitate social norms in a non-authoritative but structured way. They felt they could achieve
this through paralleling ways of being with the horse and the client. Paralleling in this context meant treating the horse and the client in the same way:

‘It was not a conscious thing we were doing it was just a way we were naturally with the horses and it just fell into place with the clients as well’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

Paralleling involved showing trust, respect, and a consistent caring attitude that took into account different ways of being. In the same way, working with horses involved adapting to the needs of each individual horse. It also involved showing a client how to nurture whilst remaining boundaried:

‘It’s important for some people to understand that you can be kind and caring and still say no that’s enough’ (Facilitator)

Practitioners drawing on this discourse saw themselves as part of a larger family unit of humans and horses where their role was to create a supportive family environment. In this family they aimed to facilitate emotional growth and development in all members of their unit, whatever their capacity.

4.4.2.1.2 Role of the Client in the Social Discourse

The role of the client in the social discourse was to be part of a family unit:

‘One of the nicest things was clients said to us was its like family they always said it was family down here, like a family, everybody looked after everybody else’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

In this family unit they learned about horses and about horse behaviour. They learned how to care for the horses and ultimately for each other. This family provided them with a shared interest in horses and the space in their lives to focus on something outside of their social and psychological challenges.

The case examples given in the practitioner accounts were of clients that had perhaps moved away from mixing with other people for various reasons, for example a severe and enduring mental illness. The horse provided the focus and the motivational force for them to begin to re-engage socially, whether that was with the horses or with humans:
'This lady who would not get up and self care, the appointment we had for the morning to go to the riding school she was up and ready and then looking forward to it, and because she was looking forward to it and she was like a completely different person' (Occupational Therapist)

In their shared space, the client role was to chat to each other about the horses, to eat, drink coffee, to be outside in a nice environment, and to socialise with others. Being part of 'the herd' was key to the role of the client as practitioners did not differentiate between how they treated the client and how they treated the horse. In the social discourse they mostly absorbed the client into the herd, rather than the horse into the family.

4.4.2.1.3 Role of the Horse in the Social Discourse

As part of this overall herd, the role of the horse was to provide a focus and motivation for clients to become part of a family style unit. There was an expectation the horses would model this family life through their interactions with each other:

‘There were a couple of mares who had just foaled and they weren’t letting anyone near the foals whatsoever and this girl walked into this field with these horses and she just looked at them and she just started to cry because it was a family unit and you could see they were all very much a family unit’ (Counsellor)

Not only would horses model family life, they would, through their established equine socialisation processes, also model the social skills required for wider community existence:

‘To be social, to have strong bonds which other people can relate to themselves through the horse, they can identify with a horse, they have friendships, they have different personalities, they can identify with. I think there is that aspect’ (Social Worker)

The role of the horse was not only to model family life and wider socialisation with each other, but to extend their inherent bonding abilities to include humans:

‘And one of the mares just went straight up to her and let her put her arms around her and just hug and she just stood there and held onto this horse and cried’ (Counsellor)
Through the provision of focus, motivation and modelling the role of the horse in the social discourse was seen to provide clients with an understanding of social normalisation. This normalisation was based on facilitative leadership within a non-authoritative, respectful, and bonded social community. To maintain the given analogy of the herd, in the horse community this style of human-horse herd would be seen to have the practitioner as the equivalent of a passive leader, that is a leader who leads by example, rather than a leader who rules by domination and fear (Rashid 2000).

### 4.4.2.2 Mental Distress Discourse

The mental distress discourse contained elements of mental health, emotional well being, psychiatry, psychology and mental illness dialogue. However, the treatment and therapy language contained the discourse within the terminology of mental distress.

A summary of the roles involved in the mental distress discourse is provided in table 15 on the following page.
Table 15: Summary of Roles in the Mental Distress Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental distress discourse</th>
<th>Elements of discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner role</td>
<td>Use of technical language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be professionally qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processing of client information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To identify and use metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To set up conditions conducive to expected outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client role</td>
<td>To change behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be a patient - but in a different way from other treatments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To accept unconditional touch from the horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse role</td>
<td>To be non judgemental and offer unconditional and positive regard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To act as a co-therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To mirror the emotions/behaviour of the client/patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To aide assessment of the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To induce nervousness and fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide unconditional touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Therapy/treatment centred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To provide treatment and therapy for a diagnosis, dis-ease or disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lessen mental distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve mental health</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2.2.1 Role of the Practitioner in the Mental Distress Discourse

The dominant discourse within this mental distress text was that of guided human equine interactions as a ‘therapy’ and as a ‘treatment’:

‘I got the bug for treatment’ (Mental Health Nurse)

Therefore the role of the practitioner was to treat a diagnosis, dis-ease or disorder:

‘I have seen patients that are anorexic extremely underweight and very poorly who had a lot of sexual abuse’ (Counsellor)
‘I found a high proportion of clients specifically with say eating disorders’
(Mental Health Nurse)

‘Addiction problems, bipolar disorder, that sort of thing’ (Facilitator)

‘He wasn’t bipolar but it would sort of go in cycles of bad and not so bad. Recovering from severe depression’ (Occupational Therapist)

Diagnosis, dis-ease and disorder were contained within language that required a level of technical or professional knowledge to understand. Within this discourse, the role of the practitioner was to have the skills required to set up and direct sessions according to anticipated outcomes for the patient. For example, a horse that was known to be motivated by food would be involved in working with a patient with an eating disorder, or horse that was good at getting a reaction would be matched with a client who was experiencing problems with communication:

‘just try and think well this patient’s having trouble with communication therefore we will use such and such horse because she is good at getting into people and getting a reaction’ (Mental Health Nurse)

Despite the directive element to their role, practitioners also talked about ‘standing back’ and allowing patients to explore:

‘I like to try and allow the patients to explore as much as they can without too many interactions and then to intervene when necessary’ (Counsellor)

By standing back and involving the horses, they felt this was less work for them, that GHEI was ‘easier’ than other treatment interactions because the horse took on some of the therapeutic role.

The maintenance of the mental distress discourse is based on the practitioner enacting a role similar to that within the medical model of treatment/therapy. These similarities involved assessing patients’ needs, setting goals, directing sessions, and intervening when appropriate. However, the role does differ from the more formalised medical model as practitioners of GHEI have a horse as a ‘co-therapist’ and the sessions take place in an outdoor environment and not in a clinic.
4.4.2.2.2 Role of the Client in the Mental Distress Discourse

The role of the client was to be a patient. The term 'patient' was used by two of the three practitioners who had a primary discourse of mental distress.

‘The patients respond to the horses’ (Facilitator)

In this role of patient within a mental distress discourse, there was an expectation that change would occur as a result of the interactions:

‘The horse’s response in week one will be totally different from its response in week five so they can also be a measuring tool so they can say in week one that black horse wouldn’t come anywhere near me because I was really angry but in week five it comes up to me every week now and I have built a relationship with it’ (Counsellor)

Mental distress as a term, rather than the terms mental health or mental illness, takes a stance from the viewpoint of the person who is suffering the distress rather than institutions (Parker et al. 1995). Practitioners offered case examples of patients' experiences of change in which they tried to relay the account from the viewpoint of the person experiencing it and not from an institutional or technical perspective:

‘but for her it was about just an unconditional touch with them they didn’t want anything back they didn’t need anything but they were just they just seemed to sense with her that she needed some comfort and it was something that a therapist could have done but it wouldn’t have had the same effect and would not have been appropriate.’ (Facilitator)

Within standardised forms of mental distress treatment, the patient/client role would not involve unconditional touch. For those who had received other forms of treatment such as talking therapies or medication, this acceptance of touch would be a new part to play in their role as a patient. Touch may be an important component when considering how GHEI is constructed as our culture moves more and more away from physical contact with other humans.
4.4.2.2.3 Role of the Horse in the Mental Distress Discourse

Within this mental distress discourse, practitioners utilised a particular narrative organisation to offer a rationale for the inclusion of horses in a treatment programme. This centred on the horse assisting them to make an initial assessment of the patient and, as we have already seen, to assess change:

‘If you are in an environment that is quite alien in some senses and you aren’t in control of a horse charging around you drop any pretence and more than anything what I get from it now is who that person really is and that give me a deeper sense of what their behaviours are and how they actually do interact with people and how they deal with these when they get really angry and frustrated and that rarely comes up in an environmentally quite controlled situation’ (Counsellor)

However, the horses were also seen to be capable of inducing nervousness and fear in a client. It then became the therapist’s role to help address that fear:

‘we worked at him getting closer to the fence and closer to the horses each week and eventually got him stood inside the arena he never participated but we worked with the fear that the guy had’ (Mental Health Nurse)

Whilst the client role was one of change, the role of the horse was as ‘co-therapist’ to the practitioner through the ‘mirroring’ of human emotions and behaviours. In addition, the horse provided therapeutic person centred attributes such as a non judgemental approach as well as unconditional positive regard and touch.

The horse role was a secondary one to that of the practitioner who was placed at the centre of the discourse in providing treatment and in setting up and directing the sessions. However, this is not to negate the role horses played in this discourse. The practitioners all acknowledged that without the specific attributes that the horses bought to the sessions, their work as therapists or treatment providers would be much ‘harder’.
4.4.2.3 Metaphysical Discourse

The metaphysical discourse contained words such as nature, natural, eco, innate, intuitive and spiritual. The roles the participants needed to adopt to maintain this discourse are summarised in table 16.

Table 16: Summary of Roles in the Metaphysical Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphysical Discourse</th>
<th>Elements of Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioner role</strong></td>
<td>To stand back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letting go</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instinctual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To act as a catalyst for whatever is needed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be calm and loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client role</strong></td>
<td>To relate with animals/ nature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To experience love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To enjoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be part of the overall human and horse herd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To utilise the horse and environment as a metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horse role</strong></td>
<td>To aide client instincts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To aide connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To provide a large, living, breathing, sensory metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be a spiritual source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be a physical, sensory and tactile source of comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual beauty (physical, spiritual, movement and eyes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be part of the overall human and horse herd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To offer unconditional love</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Validation</td>
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</table>

**Values**
- Use of all senses such as touch (warmth) and smell
- Relaxed and chilled
- Existentialism (People know what is best for themselves and there is a connection between all living things)
- Horse centred
- Belief in interconnection between all species

**Purpose**
- Love
- Connection
- Emotional growth and development
4.4.2.3.1 Role of the Practitioner in the Metaphysical Discourse

The role of the practitioner in maintaining the metaphysical discourse was to act as a catalyst in establishing the right environment for a client to interact with a horse. The underlying belief was that whatever then took place between the client and the horse would be right for that client at that point in time. There was a belief that horses could be ‘healing’.

Yet, practitioner belief in equine ability alone to heal clients could not be articulated at times:

‘There is something special about them but actually trying to put that into words is quite difficult isn’t it’ (Social Worker)

Clients within this overall discourse were seen to be in some way detached so the establishment of the right environment was seen as vital for connection to take place. Although practitioners discussed connection within the overall context of a metaphysical discourse, it was not always entirely clear from the texts what exactly they meant by the term.

Connection can have physical, psychological, social, metaphysical, as well as equitation connotations. Take as an example the following quote:

‘I think they come back with a feeling of having connected with somebody or something’ (Complimentary Practitioner)

In one context the use of the term connection here could be psychological. Feelings of detachment, depersonalisation or dissociation are recognised within certain diagnosable mental conditions. For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2000), known as DSM IV, lists the criteria for Depersonalisation Disorder, which includes a feeling of detachment from oneself. Research by Simeon and Abugel (2006) found that symptoms of depersonalisation can improve by being in an outdoor environment. When ‘they come back’, participants were referring to clients coming back from spending time outside with the horses.

Connection also has social connotations. The social context of connection is where social structures themselves are reported to cause alienation and where
the process of coming together with other people and horses minimises that alienation. Thus, a person that is in some way socially alienated becomes connected to the human and horse herd through the process of interaction. This is one example of the possible blending of the discourses where in this case there is a potential enmeshment of the social and metaphysical discourses.

Another form of connection commonly discussed in the equine world is that of a human and horse connection (Coates 2007). In this sense the term implies a partnership, a friendship, where each part of the equation of horse and human comes together to form the equivalent of the previously discussed mythological centaur (section 1.3).

However, the primary discourse of the practitioner that made this quote was metaphysical. The metaphysical implication of the term connection is about having a connection with a source. Quite what this source consists of is not clear. It might be spiritual as in one of the three Dharma Seals in Buddhism which holds the belief that we are all part of an interconnected universe where everything exists in relation to everything else (Sell and Roberts 2002): or it may relate to biophysics, such as the Gaia Theory which is an ecological concept where the earth is viewed as a single homeostatic organism. Either way, the metaphysical application of connection is the existential belief that there is a connection between all living beings:

‘There is a connection that is not measurable erm some kind level to what we verbalize things on a higher level of communication almost instinctual and possibly going back to when we didn’t have language and I think that relationship on the horses level erm brings that back but that is just my belief I don’t know if it’s true.’ (Mental Health Nurse)

In the metaphysical context of connection, the equine environment as well as the horse itself formed a large part in the accounts given of clients feeling connected with somebody or something. Whatever context the term is taken to mean, one of the most important elements underlying connection was the two way relationship between horse and human where validation from both parties led to connection:

‘horses can validate whatever the issues however we look or smell they can validate as they are non judgemental.’ (Facilitator)
In the metaphysical discourse the practitioner acted as a catalyst for this validation to occur and then stood back so as not to interfere with the process.

‘I tend to stand back a great deal and just watch what happens and allow it to happen naturally’ (Mental Health Nurse)

The role of the practitioner in maintaining the metaphysical discourse was based on what they perceived to be natural and instinctual, although at times limitations in their language made them struggle to put this into words, other than in an overarching spiritual context. Practitioners acted as this intuitive catalyst, to establish the right setting and environment for the clients to interact with all their senses with the horses.

4.4.2.3.2 Role of the Client in the Metaphysical Discourse

The client role was to interact with all their senses with the horses, to connect, and to enjoy being part of the herd.

As part of this connection and enjoyment, one of the key aspects of their role was to give and to experience love. Practitioners talked about clients giving love and receiving love from the horses:

‘I think a lot of love. She spoke about getting love for the first time back from them, feeling love from them’ (Facilitator)

‘I think to love a horse’ (Psychiatrist)

Like the word connection, love too has many different meanings. It is an abstract concept which has psychological and biological theories attached to it. In the psychological context, Sternberg (1998) postulated that love has three different components, intimacy, passion and commitment. The majority of practitioners in this study talked of love and passion and also exhibited commitment to horses from their early childhood. It seems that clients may also talk of love according to the accounts given by the practitioners. It was evident from the given case examples that some clients showed a level of commitment to the horses by continuing to engage with them over relatively long periods of time and in personally challenging circumstances.
The work of Sternberg (1998) showed seven different kinds of love experiences, but they are all related to human-to-human love and not to the animal-human bond. Yet the metaphysical discourse clearly showed that loving horses and being loved by them in return was an important part of the client role. Yet, like love between humans, the course of true love does not always run smoothly as practitioners did talk about clients having less positive experiences with horses:

‘was thrown off and badly hurt and she was crying and had a negative attitude towards horses after that’ (Psychiatrist)

No practitioner however talked about a negative experience for a client during GHEI sessions.

4.4.2.3.3 Role of the Horse in the Metaphysical Discourse

The horse role was to be simply a horse. To be physical, tactile, sensory and visceral, with large open eyes, and to act as a horse does in a herd. Their smell, size, warmth, touch, ability to be hugged, and visual beauty were all cited as important elements for engaging clients. Yet to the humans involved in this study, the horse was constructed as being so much more. Practitioners articulated a strong belief that horses were spiritual:

‘Horses are part of our psyche, part of our culture in an in depth and spiritual way’ (Social Worker)

It was seen in the Introduction that the horse is part of our culture and has thus been part of our language for thousands of years. Horses have appeared in all this time in myths and religious stories where they were granted spiritual qualities, such as Pegasus the flying horse used to carry thunder and lightening, Chiron the Centaur who was the first healer, Epona, the goddess of horses who was also leader of souls in the after life, and the four horses ridden by the horsemen of the apocalypse (Johns 2006). These are historical examples of spirituality linked to horses across different cultures in time.

There are published books on horses which have utilised spiritual discourse (McCormick et al. 1997, Kohanakov, 2001). This suggests a language
surrounds the horse that links them with the ability to facilitate spiritual growth in humans. McCormick et al (1997) base their GHEI knowledge on Celtic wisdom which includes a love and respect for nature (Sellner 1998), whilst Kohanakov (2001) looks to Tao to define horses and spirituality. Tao is based on the ancient Chinese philosophy of Lao Tsu who taught there is a natural order to the universe.

Earlier in this section on findings we saw how the practitioners used the books available from USA authors as a resource. Whilst it is not clear on what specific basis practitioners who used the term *spiritual* applied it, as it can be incorporated into many different religions and philosophies, it is clear there was a spiritual dimension to their accounts. Whatever the fundamental basis of their use of the term spiritual, the practitioners believed that horses had an exceptional sense of being able to connect with clients and offer unconditional love.

### 4.4.3 Are there contesting discourses?

Within the context of these findings at a pragmatic level, the social, mental distress and metaphysical discourses did not appear to conflict. Rather they complimented each other through the interweaving of the discourses to become one overarching discourse that contained elements of mental distress, socialisation, and metaphysical dimensions, each with a differing but complimentary function (see section 4.4.4).

However, at a more fundamental level, conflict arose through the inherent values underpinning each of the three discourses and how they translated to the client/practitioner relationship. The values inherent in each of the three discourses are detailed in tables 13, 14 and 15. These values include trust and respect in social discourse, professional knowledge in the mental distress discourse, and the belief that clients know what is best for them in the metaphysical discourse. Therefore, the mental distress, social, and metaphysical discourses all have differing values. An example of how these value differences acted out in practice was evidenced by the value given to the expertise of the practitioner, client and horse in each discourse:
• Mental distress – the practitioner is the expert with technical knowledge. The practitioner knows what is best for the client. Authoritative knowledge is valued.

• Social – the client is the expert with knowledge of self. The client knows what is best for them. Embodied knowledge is valued.

• Metaphysical – the horse is the expert with an unarticulated knowledge. The horse knows what is best for the client. Equine ways of being are valued.

There was potential for tension to arise over what value held the most authority across a practitioner discourse where all these values were interwoven in their discourses. Yet, practitioners appeared to manage what could be considered contesting tensions without apparent recognition or ambivalence. This acceptance of plurality may have been related more to the functions of the three primary discourses which will be looked at later in this chapter in section 4.4.4.

In the Methodology Chapter it was seen that the basis of power within a technological society such as ours is knowledge and that discourses are ways of maintaining power relations. The practitioners in this study reflected and reinforced power relations in their discourses through where they were situated in the texts in relation to the other key players (Figure 2).
It was interesting to note that there are terms to define where humans place themselves in relation to respected knowledge. This includes authoritative or technical knowledge where the practitioner is central. It also includes the term embodied knowledge when the client is central. However, there is no actual term for the knowledge and subsequent power created by, or afforded to, the horse, when the horse is considered central. The horse is clearly placed in the metaphysical discourse as being an expert with knowledge. Yet, the knowledge the horse brings is not articulated. Horses do not have a language outside of their own herd interactions and what humans construct for the species.
Therefore, they do not have a place in the dominant knowledge hierarchy. Thus, if a practitioner stands back from the horse and client during the course of a session they may be perceived as less authoritative and therefore less effective. Alternatively, they may be seen as non-authoritarian, accepting, and not controlling. For some practitioners, paralleling their relationship with the horse, to their relationship with the client, was an important aspect of their role.

A more hidden dimension of the power dynamics involved in GHEI may be through the involvement of the horse itself. As discussed in the Introduction, the horse has been a historical symbol of wealth, affluence and physical strength down through the ages, all of which are all symbols of power. Practitioners’ ability to own and/or control the power of the horse may be a symbolic metaphor for clients in relation to their perceptions of the power dynamics.

It can be seen from this that the power balances between each of the three discourses was not the same and in some ways were antithetical and therefore incompatible. It would seem to be paradoxical that a practitioner could draw on a discourse, in which their expertise was the prime component for treating a patient, but at the same time stand back and draw on a discourse where the horse was capable of effecting change in a client without the overt input of a practitioner. Yet, this was indeed the case. Practitioners blended their discourses together in individualised ways. This had the effect of blurring the boundaries of power relations.

Certain practitioners were able to acknowledge the power inherent in mental distress language and the ensuing implications for the client:

‘I don’t call that stuff therapy, I call that stuff someone who has more or less useful conversations with people and because, therapy, we have to use it sometimes, but it has implications of expertise and being better that other people or money or that. I think if it’s about anything it’s about giving people back power and confidence’ (Psychiatrist)

They also acknowledged the need to stand back from drawing on dominant language to give the client space, as well as to trust in their own capabilities to grow and develop through their interaction with the horse and environs:
'The horse is more what offers the chance for growth and development and experience' (Psychiatrist)

These discourses suggest power influences inherent in the knowledge bases of the discourses are not insurmountable to practitioners who weave them together. What is not known is how these subtle shifts impact on wider social structures such as psychiatry, or how they impact on clients and even those with the least power, which are the horses.

4.4.4 How does the version of reality the discourses maintain mesh with discourses in other contexts?

The three discourses are enmeshed with each other to provide one overall discourse. However, the reality of that enmeshment is that each of the identified three discourses is delineated from the other, not only by values as we have seen in the previous section, but also by where practice is located:

- The mental distress discourse located practice within the structures of an acknowledged and powerful model of practice. The structures in mental distress involve professional qualifications and technical knowledge.

- The social discourse located practice at the pragmatic and workable level of interaction and socialisation. The structures in socialisation are generally understood by the wider populace because of the part they play in human naturalisation into social processes.

- The metaphysical discourse located practice in a spiritual structure, which accounted for personal beliefs and philosophy.

Within this version of reality, the discourses were enmeshed yet delineated by social structures. It can be seen that each element of the overall woven discourses served a specific function:

- The function of the mental distress discourse was to provide authoritative power and authentication of practice.
• The function of the social discourse was to provide acceptance of practice within a general context that the majority of people could relate to.

• The function of the metaphysical discourse was for practitioners to express their own spiritual and philosophical beliefs and how these related to their practice.

In looking at where discourses located practice and the function they served, we can begin to see why and how they were enmeshed and how apparently contesting discourses could exist alongside each other without any apparent ambivalence. Each discourse had a different but complimentary function.

4.4.5 What kind of world is conjured up? What kinds of people are present in the world alluded to or described?

These two questions are combined because there are three worlds conjured up by the texts. These three worlds are inhabited separately by each of the key players in the GHEI field. These key players are the practitioners, the clients, and the horses. Each of these players represented a separate reality. To reiterate, the reality presented here for all three worlds has been accounted for by the practitioners, but seen through the lens of the researcher.

4.4.5.1 Horse World

The horse world conjured up within the texts reveals them to be part of a practitioner’s life across a lifespan, from childhood to adulthood, in work and out of it. In this world horses are generally loved, nurtured and respected. They are constructed as having individual, familial, and maternal qualities. They have the ability to utilise their socialisation skills to involve other species, mainly humans. Horses live in this world to provide a focus for human socialisation and a socialisation model for humans to relate to. This model is visceral and sensory, with a clear hierarchy and boundaries, but it is also
accepting and non judgemental. They are spiritual beings and can facilitate spiritual development in humans.

The discourses reveal a conviction that horses live in the moment and because of this they are seen to have no ulterior motives or hidden agenda. They are perceptive of humans and their ability to recognise human emotions holds the capacity to build connected relationships with them. Through this horse-human connection, humans can learn to connect with each other once again.

Horses are presented as a medium for easing pain and facilitating emotional growth and development, even when they induce fear in people. Due to their inherent horse qualities they assist with the engagement and assessment of clients. They act as a co-therapist by offering unconditional positive regard, love, and by mirroring human emotion. They also act in a monitoring role to see how far clients have come in the change process. In this world, horses offer humans a large, living, breathing metaphor for life.

In summary, the horse world is one of provision, assisting, supporting, aiding, and helping humans. In this way the world accounted for in these discourses does not differ from the world horses have inhabited alongside humans for thousands of years. Although there is not the same expectation of hard physical labour, there is still an anthropocentric expectation they will serve human need and purpose.

4.4.5.2 Practitioner World

The practitioners in this world came from various professional backgrounds and practice in different ways according to their discourses. They differed in their rationales, philosophies, and values, yet, in practitioner world they all held a strong belief that horses could, and would, make a difference to the lives of the patients/clients they worked with.

All but one of the practitioners had been sensitised to horses at an early age. Since childhood they had remained in association with them. They loved horses and felt passionate about them. They talked of how horses had
impacted on their lives which had led to their beliefs that horses could impact in the same way on others. They imbued horses with certain qualities and believed these qualities could make a difference for clients. They thought that the work with horses was intuitive and innate.

The practitioners were all professionals in their own field prior to practicing GHEI and some practised according to their professional background whilst the majority did not. In this world practitioners recognised parallels between working with horses and working with clients. These parallels include showing respect, building trust, engagement and rapport.

In practitioner world each had a personal philosophy underpinning their practice. Some believed in an interconnection between species, whilst others believed the horse was a spiritual conduit for human growth. In this world it was evident that practitioners had given some thought to the metaphysical nature of the universe and how horses, clients, and practitioners fitted into a greater plan. Their role was to bring this together in whatever way they could construct it.

4.4.5.3 Client World

The clients accounted for by the practitioners in this world were those who had lost relationships, were hurting, were not connected, who were fearful, and who had been judged in some way. There were adults and children in this world who had been ‘lost’ or ‘damaged’ but they were also ‘survivors’.

Some of these clients knew what was best for them. They were able to interact with the horses at their own pace and meet their own needs without direction. Other clients, it was voiced, needed more direction. Sessions with the horses in these circumstances were set up for them in advance.

Clients had often experienced other forms of therapy/treatment or had been involved with mental or social care service provision over a long period of time. But, in this world, they were generally motivated by the horses. The horses gave them a focus to attend for sessions and the chance to talk about
something other than themselves’. They were able to sit and ‘chill’, chat, eat, and drink coffee in an outdoor setting. They were able to touch, smell and hug an accepting, non judgemental being. In this world they were also able to face some of their fears. These fears included the horses, the sessions/therapy, other people, aspects of themselves, or change.

Clients stayed in the world for different lengths of time, some just for one session, others for a series of sessions, whilst some stayed for years. They shared this world with the practitioners and the horses and often with other clients as well. Longer term work meant that others in this world became like family. As family, they looked out for each other, and the horses.

4.4.6 How about the people least likely to be associated with this world?

The people least likely to be associated with this world are those individuals who the practitioners articulated would not benefit from the involvement of horses. This was centred on two groups of people. The first group can be illustrated by an isolated case in which the client was an experienced horse professional, and the practitioner expressed a primary mental distress discourse:

‘an older gentlemen who had been around horses in the military spent a lot of time trying to align himself with the professionals as if he wanted approval and his holding back really frustrated the group because they said you know how to do this umm why don’t you help us’ (Counsellor)

In this given case the client had a lot of experience of physically caring for horses, but the practitioner account was that he could not adjust his thinking to see the session in a therapeutic context. The practitioner stated they would be unlikely to work with another skilled horse client in the future.

An interpretation of this scenario might be that clients who do not accept the subject positioning of patient, but who has a practitioner who draws on a dominant mental distress discourse, are those clients least likely to be associated with GHEI world. Authoritative power inherent in this text places the onus on the client for their abdication of an expected role, regardless of their embodied knowledge. It does not locate the onus on the practitioner for
not adapting their language or practice, in order to place the client in a
different subject position. As previously noted, practitioners drawing on
mental distress discourse, located themselves at the centre of the
practitioner/client relationship as the expert. This positioning leaves little
room for manoeuvre for the client.

Whilst the skilled horse professional client was a single isolated case provided
by one practitioner, the second group of people least likely to be associated
with this world was accounted for by the majority of practitioners. They felt
they would not work with anyone who was aggressive or violent towards
animals. However, this exclusion did cause a dichotomy for the practitioners.
They wanted to protect the horse, as illustrated in the following quote:

‘Well I wouldn’t want young people around the horses that were um had a
history of hurting animals’ (Psychiatrist)

However, they also wanted to provide a service for the client:

‘However I do think um it would be a shame if that sort of client was excluded
from um working with the horse full stop because you need to look at the
reasons behind the symptoms of the problem’ (Teacher)

This exclusion of aggressive or violent clients was not only in the best interests
of the horses, it was also in the interests of other clients:

‘But it is also distressing for other clients if they witness anything they may
perceive as abuse towards animals’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

Three practitioners thought there were no exclusions to the people that could
be associated with this world. However, to accomplish this practitioner may
have to adjust their practice:

‘Any person, I’m not a psycho….I’m not a psychotherapist and I am sure there
are some psychiatric…I am not professionally equipped to do it umm but if…if
somebody was referred to me in that situation I would then say this is what we
do, if you come along with the psychotherapist, the mental health person, and
I’ll do the horse work having said that I think the horses can do a lot of it’
(Complimentary Practitioner)

Not only were aggressive and violent clients least likely to be associated with
this world, the same applied to the horses:
‘If we actually had a horse which was dangerous really, unpredictable, it kicked a lot or bit (Psychiatrist)

Violent and aggressive clients, and horses, were least likely to be associated with this world of GHEI because it was perceived that they could cause physical harm. Therefore, those least likely to be associated with this world are clients with a history of violence or aggression towards animals, clients who are experienced horse people but can not adjust to the client role, and horses that kick or bite humans. However, violent and aggressive practitioners were not discussed, thereby reflecting the power dynamics inherent in GHEI practice. This is where practitioners act as the gatekeepers to practice, but only to the clients and horses, and not to themselves or other practitioners.

All practitioners interviewed practiced some form of GHEI and, whatever their primary discourse, all believed fundamentally in the value of involving equines in their work. Therefore, professionals who do not have an inherent belief in the value of involving equines in their practice would also be unlikely to be associated with this world. They simply would not be drawn to practice in this way.

4.4.7 What are the important things, ideas/or tasks in the sort of world created?

A common denominator between all three of the dominant discourses was the horse acting as an overtly expressed or innate provider of metaphor. The task of the practitioner through all of the discourses was to facilitate this metaphor use. The texts revealed varying ways of applying metaphor and the method practitioners used was based on their primary discourse.

Figure 3 shows a representation of the three ways of employing metaphor in practice surfaced in the discourses. Each one relates to each of the three dominant discourses.
At the centre of the linked circles is ‘processing’ which is a psychological term for thought and emotional restructuring. Through a constructionist lens, this would involve the client adopting a different subject positioning (see Chapter 6 section 6.3.11 for further detail on subject positioning).

It can be determined from Figure 3 that each discourse implies a different way of using metaphor and processing metaphor. The use of metaphor was generated either by the client, or by the practitioner. Alternatively, no metaphor was verbalised but the context and the horse were seen as providing a metaphor that did not require further discussion. In each of these three situations, the processing of the metaphor took place in different ways.
The following section provides examples of metaphor use from each of the discourses.

4.4.7.1 Metaphor Use in Social Discourse

A given example of the social use of metaphor involved the client relating their issues to the horse. The following extract is about a horse that had been deliberately cut by her previous owners down her face, reportedly to improve her breathing:

‘within the horse world there are the big ones, the little ones and the skinny ones, the ones who’ve been abused, you know, one of our mares we picked up from Spain and she’s got serrated scar all over her nose, it’s found really from the horses head down and in, its literally serrated so it’s really really cruel, so she’s got this scaring over her nose, and what’s fascinating is actually when the kids see it they’ve got their own self harm or scarring, you know how they relate to it is unbelievable’ (Complimentary Practitioner)

Within this extract the metaphor was autogenic, that is client generated. The clients recognised that the scarring on the horse’s body related to the scarring on their own bodies. The metaphor was acknowledged by the practitioner who then assisted with the client processing of the information.

The practitioner in this case had not initially realised the relevance of the physical scarring to children who self harm, or who have been abused. It was the children themselves that likened their experiences to those of the horse, and it was the children who initiated the processing. The practitioner recognised this was happening and assisted the children to process feelings and thoughts.

4.4.7.2 Metaphor Use in Mental Distress Discourse

Within the mental distress discourse, metaphor was offered or generated by the practitioner who then led the processing with the client. An example of this was using a horse with a specific condition or history:
‘I would take people in with recovering from some form of abuse or sexual abuse or sexual issues erm and involve horses that themselves had been abused and they seem to be some kinda connection that happened afterwards when we were processing it’ (Mental Health Practitioner)

However, it may be that clients recognise their own capabilities in creating and processing metaphors, as according to one practitioner with a primary discourse of mental distress:

‘a couple of patients have actually said can you wait outside the arena’ (Counsellor)

In this scenario, the patients were taking over by extracting the practitioner from the treatment process. Apparent absence of the practitioner is where the metaphysical use of metaphor differs from its use in the social and mental distress discourses.

4.4.7.3 Metaphor use in Metaphysical Discourse

The metaphysical discourse tended to account for the horse as a large, living breathing sensory metaphor for life. It was the client responsibility to pick up on the potential wealth of metaphor available to them from the horse and environment, and it was the client responsibility to process this without recourse to any leading or assistance from the practitioner:

‘We just provide the space, the horses, and the environment and they can take what they want from this or more to the point what they need’ (Natural Horse Trainer)

Processing therefore was not a necessary function for the practitioner. Verbal processing by the client was also not a necessary function. The existentialist belief was that the client was able to process adequately themselves:

‘and you do that by letting go of it yourself and not deskilling people’ (Psychiatrist)

This account of self processing by the client may have led to practitioners describing GHEI as ‘easier’, most likely because they did not have to work to lead the client in the processing.
4.4.8 What connotations does this particular word have?

One language dilemma grounded in the three primary discourses was that of labelling them. The dialogue and technical language used within the social and mental distress discourses was technically, academically, professionally, and culturally recognisable and acceptable. However, the third discourse, the metaphysical was not so easy to recognise or to label. This section therefore focuses on the choice of the word metaphysical to label the third discourse.

At the outset of the analysis, particular words were elicited from the texts in relation to this third discourse. These words were explored for their social connotations and their potential to influence practice and are replicated in Appendix 6. Each of these words had the potential to shape and influence practice, yet, each was so enmeshed within the texts that they could not be taken as an individual discourse in their own right. These words included terms such as ‘nature’, ‘spiritual’, ‘natural’, ‘eco’, ‘innate’, ‘intuitive’ and ‘organic’.

In the search for a generic term that encompassed all of the above words the term metaphysical appeared to achieve this, although this was not a word any of the practitioners used. So, it important to note that the rationale for the use of the term metaphysical in this study was based on where this particular discourse located practice, as well as the function that discourse served. The location within a spiritual structure and the function of providing for practitioners to account for their own personal philosophy within their practice meant there was a much wider function to the discourse than accounting for spiritual or religious beliefs alone. The Encarta Dictionary (2007) defines the term metaphysical as relating to the philosophical study of nature and being. As we have seen, practitioners provided a range of philosophical discourse in relation to their GHEI practice. The term metaphysical when applied to their discourses was able to accommodate these eclectic accounts.

The metaphysical accounts the practitioners used were not fallible, testable or provable statements. Take as an example this statement by one practitioner:
'We are all connected in some way in this universe' (Facilitator)

There is no known positivist methodology that can prove or disprove this metaphysical statement. Whilst the connotations of the mental distress and social words used would situate GHEI within accepted social structures, the words used in the third discourse lacked clarity in placing GHEI within any specific structure.

Practitioners accounted for metaphysical discourse during the interviews which implied their reasonable beliefs about the nature of the world. Whilst these discourses were individualised, according to each respondent’s ontological perspective, every practitioner offered a metaphysical discourse to a greater or lesser extent alongside their more concrete mental distress and social discourses.

As seen earlier in this chapter, the function of this metaphysical discourse was to give voice to a practitioner’s personal philosophical beliefs about the involvement of horses in their practice. The accounts of their beliefs included their ontological perspectives on the nature of reality, as well as their beliefs about the qualities inherent in the equine world that are a resource for human growth and development. A further connotation of the words forming this discourse was to justify the catalytic role of the practitioner. A role where the practitioner does not have to be active and where they just set the scene for interaction to occur. However, in order to take, what could be perceived a non-active role in the interactions, they needed to provide a sound philosophical basis for this to occur. Metaphysical discourse provided the rationale to account for their practice.

4.4.9 Where does this discourse locate guided human equine interactions? How will this location affect the way these interactions are viewed by clients, professionals and others?

For clients, this location of GHEI as a metaphysical/mental distress/social intervention will be appealing for those for whom more standardised western treatments have not attained the desired results but they do not want to
completely forgo a structured format. The horse may be alternative to sitting in a clinic, or facing an educator with power point slides, but the majority of practitioners in this study came from credible and qualified fields of practice, such as occupational therapy, social work, or teaching, with all their authenticated systems and processes. As such, these professionals carried their technical knowledge and authoritative power with them. Yet, quite how their alternative styles of practice are accounted for by their clients is not yet known.

The case examples accounted for by the practitioners suggested that even clients they classed as ‘hard to engage’, such as those with an enduring mental illness, were willing to engage with the horses, often over relatively long periods of time. Adult clients of the practitioners had reportedly tried and tested other forms of therapeutic or learning interactions. One practitioner accounted for his own experiences of various treatments for his addictive behaviour and felt nothing had previously worked for him. Yet, on first participating in a GHEI session he reported that something powerful happened. He felt GHEI offered hope when all else had perceived to fail.

However, it is not known why this might be. We have seen from the discourses this could be due to the style or philosophy of the practitioner, the social and natural environment, or something about the horses. Perhaps it is a combination of all of these and more. Practitioners will only be able to start to formulate a response to this when the recipients of the service, the clients, add their voices to these accounts.

For the professionals and institutions outside of GHEI, the discourses, in particular the metaphysical discourse, potentially locates GHEI practice and practitioners at the level of an ‘other’. Gergen (2009 p.19) points out that language is a system of differences, where the way of talking about these differences is through binary oppositions. That is, dividing things into two. For example, the meaning of mental illness can only be differentiated through the meaning given to mental health. Without this binary distinction, each of these terms would be meaningless. The practice of involving a horse in therapeutic and learning practice only gains meaning when it is considered against other therapeutic and learning practices where equines are not involved.
Dominant groups, such as the institutional systems established to service mental illness, lay claim to the privileged position whilst claiming the opposite point to be ‘others’. Equally, any organised religious group could perceive the metaphysical content of GHEI as an other whilst laying claim to a privileged position.

Otherness is dependent on what is valued in any one culture at any given point in time (Gergen 2009). Within mental health/illness, the socio-political aspects of service commissioning involve evidence based practice, which is one such contemporary value. One limitation of GHEI practice is that it has not yet acquired the value of an evidence base to underpin practice. Therefore, it is relegated to other status. Despite this apparent otherness, two practitioners in this study did hold contracts with a local authority. This may have been more to do with their slow evolvement into GHEI practice and previously being known to the authorities in question as qualified practitioners in another profession. In this way they achieved a level of privilege through their background professional status, rather than through their GHEI practice alone.

This otherness places GHEI on the fringe of mainstream mental health service delivery, where it could be viewed with some scepticism. However, as Berger and Luckman (1966) point out, being privileged holds its own problems. Others have to be kept out through various techniques such as ‘intimidation, rational and irrational propaganda, mystification and the manipulation of prestige symbols’ (Berger and Luckman 1966 p.104), whilst at the same time keeping the privileged in. This will be the challenge for mainstream services into the future, as those who are already privileged, such as GHEI practitioners, are haemorrhaging through to otherness and carrying some of that privilege with them.

4.5 Summary of the Findings

The descriptive analysis of the participants showed that all but one of the practitioners had early, positive, and ongoing contact with equines since early childhood. Contact with equines was described as passionate, obsessive, and a based on general love of horses from childhood and beyond. All of the
practitioners had additional contact with horses outside of their work environment.

The interpretative analysis elicited three dominant discourses that were interwoven throughout the interviews. One discourse was identified as Mental Distress which was grounded in institutional practice where the client role was one of a patient in need of treatment. The expert in this discourse was the practitioner and the horse was a co-therapist.

The second discourse was a Social Discourse which was non-authoritative and in which the client role was to socialise and become part of a family herd. The expert in this discourse was the client and the practitioner role was one of paralleling trust, respect and a consistent caring attitude. The role of the horse was to provide a focus and motivation for the client to become part of the family herd.

The third discourse was the Metaphysical discourse which incorporated the practitioners’ philosophy on why they involved horses. The client role was to interact with all of their senses, to experience connection and love, and enjoy being part of the herd. In this discourse the horse was the expert. It was the expert in being physical, tactile, beautiful and spiritual in the sense that it could offer unconditional love and connect with clients. The practitioner role was to act as a catalyst by creating and maintaining the right environment for the client to interact with the horse.

Every practitioner was unique in the way they blended these three discourses together and subsequently in the way they practiced GHEI. All practitioners utilised the horse in some way as a metaphor for life.

The three primary discourses accounted for in this study can be linked to the ethos of three separate organisations dedicated to GHEI that have become prominent in the USA over the past ten years. The mental distress discourse can be related to EAGALA which is focused on the Equine Assisted Psychotherapy aspect of GHEI. The social discourse can be related to EFMHA branch of the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, where is there is a strong focus on the Equine Facilitated Learning aspect of GHEI. Finally, the metaphysical discourse can be linked to Epona which is much more
focused on the horse-human spiritual relationship. Details of these organisations are found on the internet.

All participants in this study had gained their information on GHEI from the internet such as USA based web forums. They had read the same few available books on the subject, or had undergone training through at least one of these three organisations. Thus, their practice was enabled through these media but also constrained within practice that had developed in a differing historical and cultural context in the USA. It was not clear if practitioners were adapting what they were learning from the USA in consideration of practising in a different historical context and social culture in the UK. The next study looks in more detail at this relationship to account for how GHEI is discursively constructed in the UK and in what way this relates to USA constructions (see section 5.1).

4.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Practitioner Study

The main limitation in this study is in the analysis of the text. Under analysis is the primary critique aimed at discourse analysis researchers by other discourse analysts (Antaki, et al 2002). Whilst this study has attempted to mitigate these limitations, the amount of data that was generated from interviews with ten practitioners was vast. This culminated in a tension between ensuring that an account was rendered that reflected the practitioner accounts against the need to analyse smaller sections of text in more depth. It is acknowledged this tension led to certain aspects of the data being described or summarised rather than interpreted, whilst other data has been subjected to a more in depth analysis and interpretation.

This aim of this study was to take a closer look at the discourses practitioners use in relation to their construction GHEI. There are only a relatively small number of practitioners in the United Kingdom and those that do practice GHEI come from many different backgrounds. Practitioners from backgrounds other than those represented in this study may have offered different discourses, as would other practitioners from the same backgrounds as those included here. However, a strength of this study is that it included a wide range of
practitioners and whilst it was not intended to be a representative sample, it still represents one third of known practitioners in the UK at the time.

Practitioners who were involved in this study all volunteered to participate stating their commitment and enthusiasm for furthering the field of practice. Therefore, this account of the findings may not be reflective of the type of practitioner who would not participate in research.

The influence of the researcher on the data collection and analysis has to be acknowledged. Knowledge of the researcher as a non practising GHEI practitioner may have influenced the findings. For example, without this knowledge of the researcher, participants may have provided more basic explanations about GHEI and not moved into personal and philosophical language. This introduction may have given a space to the practitioners to not try and ‘sell’ GHEI to a sceptic, but to account for their beliefs. Provision of the metaphysical discourse added richness to the institutional discourses that might not otherwise have been known, although an alternative introduction may have resulted in equally rich but different findings. In the same way the topics in the interview schedule could have led practitioners towards ways of talking about practice. For example, asking practitioners about their first experiences of horses resulted in talk of passion and love that might otherwise not have been illustrated if the interview schedule had only focused on current GHEI practice.

Finally, the constructionist principles within this study acknowledge that the account given here is only one construction of GHEI as seen through the lens of the researcher and based on the language used by the practitioners at one given point in time. At times it was challenging to remain with this constructionist focus and not be detracted in the analysis and interpretation.

The following study builds on the findings in this practitioner study to further account for the discursive construction of GHEI.
5 Structure of this Chapter

This chapter describes the rationale, method, and findings of a discursive analysis of two internet based marketing websites for GHEI. One site emanated from the United States of America (USA) and one site from the United Kingdom (UK).

5.1 Rationale for the Study

The rationale for undertaking this particular study is outlined in this section. It is primarily related to the aim of this thesis, which is to provide an account of how GHEI is discursively constructed.

In the Literature Review chapter it was noted that the majority of the research and books relating to GHEI have emanated from the USA. In the Methodology Chapter it was highlighted that authoritative knowledge is the privileged technical knowledge. According to Foucault (1978) practitioners, such as those involved in GHEI, are experts who reinforce acceptable discourses. However, what is not known is how expert discourses on GHEI that evolve in one culture are accounted for in another.

In the Practitioner Study it was seen that practitioners were informed by the more extensive practice taking place in the USA. Practitioners from the UK were turning to the USA for membership of organisations, to access training, to acquire books and information on research, as well as utilising the internet where websites emanating from the USA contained further information on GHEI. Thus, practitioners in the UK were being educated about GHEI via the USA.

The cultural view in social constructionism has important elements in relation to the education of practitioners (Gergen 2009). The focus of the educational
process is on the relationship between educators and those learning about GHEI, as well as between practitioners themselves. As seen in section 3.4.1, the focus is not on the individual mind creating knowledge. Whilst learning about GHEI, practitioners are able to draw on only a finite number of discursive resources that are available to them (Burr 2008). These discourses make it possible for practitioners to see GHEI in a certain way.

However, it is not known how the interplay between these finite discourses, which appear to emanate from the USA, are accounted for in the discursive construction of GHEI in the UK. What is considered ‘real’ in one culture may not be so in another (Berger and Luckman 1966). It is only when the values and practices of one culture are compared to another that it becomes apparent that there are differences. Cultural differences are mental maps of a reality constructed in differing historical and social contexts (St Clair 2006).

Tracing from where discourses evolve can help develop an understanding of the underlying assumptions that ultimately provide those discourses with contemporary acceptance. For example, Foucault (1978) in his treatise on the history of sexuality traces the discourses used to suppress sexual discussion. He places these discourses within the social practices of an increasingly disciplined society. This suppression of sexual talk led to the rise of pornography. Thus, where there is power there is resistance (Foucault 1978 p.92).

It could be argued that the privileging of mental health discourse both in the USA and the UK, has culminated in a form of resistance, as demonstrated in this case through the inclusion of a horse as a ‘therapist’. Despite this privileging of mental health across both cultures, the mental health systems constructed in both the USA and the UK has evolved within different cultural and historical contexts. Although certain therapeutic approaches are common across both countries and may be the considered similar, there can be some challenges in applying a therapeutic approach grown in one culture to another because of cultural differences. One example of this can be found in the Twelve Step approach to addiction which originated in the USA but which has a very different history to the UK in relation to substances (National Institute on Drug Abuse 2008). For instance, the USA underwent prohibition, whereas the UK prescribed heroin for those people who had an addiction. Wormer (1999)
looked at the values underpinning the Twelve Step approach and found it had developed from puritanical and military concepts. Policy and practice in the UK has always been focused on harm minimisation (Miller and Rollnick, 2002), rather than the total abstinence advocated in the Twelve Steps.

Similarly, there are social and historical differences in our relationships with horses. For example, the USA has a history and contemporary culture of cowboys/cowgirls, which developed from the vaqueros of northern Mexico (Wood 2002). These vaqueros can trace their roots back to the Spanish conquistadors, who first bought horses to the Americas (Wood 2002). The UK has no such orientation.

In the practitioner study, it was seen that practitioners in the UK were motivated to turn to the internet for their expert body of knowledge (section 4.3.1). They later accessed other resources such as books and GHEI organisations, but knowledge of these resources was illuminated via the internet. The internet is a mass global communication system where interested voices can locate each other through email, web forums, web based programmes and websites. These voices are not just represented textually, but multi modally. That is, they contain pictures, graphics, sound, colour, movement, and text in a variety of styles.

This freely available discursive material on the internet offers an opportunity to access a wealth of information about GHEI practice in both the USA and the UK. Web based materials are a way for GHEI practitioners to provide information about their practice to the ‘outside’ world. Therefore, looking at websites in particular offered an opportunity to investigate how GHEI is accounted for to a wider audience, including potential clients.

The purpose of this study is to provide an account of how UK practitioner constructions relate to USA practitioner constructions through an interrogation of website material from each country.
5.2 METHODS

The general approach adopted in this study is discourse analysis as identified in the Methodology Chapter and employed within the practitioner study. However, the genre of discursive material in this website study is different from the transcribed textual data obtained from the interviews with the practitioners. As previously noted, the material in websites can involve a range of visual and auditory data. Paltridge (2000 p.194), states the world wide web holds ‘enormous potential’ for the critical study of the use of discourse because of its multi modality. From his perspective on discourse analysis, Paltridge (2000) believes pictures involved in web discourse must be taken into account, as in many instances, they give a fuller picture of the social practices involved. For example age, gender and social standing may not always be elicited from text alone.

An example of discourse analysis as applied to a visual medium can be seen in the work of Wodak (2008) who presented at the plenary session of a conference organised by the Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines (CADAAD) project at the University of Hertfordshire (CADAAD 2008). Here, she offered an analysis of the racist discourses involved in an Austrian political poster containing graphics and text. At this session, Wodak (2008) deconstructed the political rhetoric inherent in the coding of the poster including the ‘resonance’ of the relationship between the speaker and hearer. From this she was able to determine how the content of the poster was framed to include certain values and principles and exclude a specific ethnic group. In the same way, graphics on websites offer an opportunity to look more widely at how GHEI is framed and what is valued.

Two websites were discursively interrogated, one website from America and one website from Britain. This interrogation used the same strategy for analysis as was used in the practitioner study based on Ballinger and Cheek (2006). The complete framework can be found in section 3.8 table 7.
5.2.1 Sample Selection

A Google search was made on a pre-determined day, the 20\textsuperscript{th} July 2008, using the term [Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT)]. As previously noted there are many terms that are applied to this work and the term used in the study of ‘guided human equine interactions’ was constructed specifically for this thesis to encompass all possible terms. The term EAT is the most commonly applied term and therefore held the potential to capture a wider range of websites.

It was determined that an analysis would be conducted of the first UK website detailed by Google and the first USA website because these would be the most likely sites accessed by interested parties. The website thus identified for the USA was Great Strides (http://www.greatstrides.org/joybio.html) whilst the website for the UK was Espire Retreats (http://www.espire-retreats.so.uk/equineat.html).

It must be noted that the structure and content of the two websites have been updated between the time of initial access (July 2008) and completion of this thesis (June 2010). The analysis in this study is based on content at the time of first access.

5.2.2 Ethical Considerations

Whilst this study did not directly involve people as participants, it did involve images of people and horses. Therefore, once the sample selection had taken place, the first step was to email the contacts given in each website, explain the research, and ask for permission to use their website for this purpose. Written documentation outlining the study was later sent to the organisations involved, and signed consent was received from each contact to use their site and graphics for the purpose of this research (Appendix 7).
5.2.3 Data Analysis

Both websites were initially interrogated individually using the strategy for analysis outlined in section 3.8. Placing images from each website alongside each other greatly enhanced the analysis because the pictorial representations were effective in graphically illustrating the similarities and differences in the discourses (see section 5.3.1.1 for an example). The inclusion of graphical representations in the analysis highlighted what has previously been stated, which is the need for a researcher to be an interpretative filter. Thus, the meaning given to any particular image was dependent on how it was personally received. In order to provide academic rigour to this process, the subliminal messages received through the images were initially weighed against researcher understanding. The interpretations were then validated by drawing on existing academic bodies of knowledge to support a particular interpretative analysis.

5.3 FINDINGS

The interrogation and analysis of the websites aimed to build on the findings from the Practitioner Study. The structure of the findings section is based on each of the discursive questions used to interrogate the websites. Direct quotes from the websites used in the discussion of the findings are highlighted in italics.

5.3.1 What is the dominant discourse?

The predominant discourse within the UK website was **metaphysical** whilst the predominant discourse in the USA website was **mental distress**. In this way both websites mirrored a dominant discourse found in the practitioner study. These predominant discourses either built on what had already been found, or provided a different perspective to that given in the practitioner study.
5.3.1.1 Dominant Discourse – UK

The dominant discourse in the UK website was metaphysical. This discourse is evidenced verbatim by the words replicated in table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK Website</th>
<th>Metaphysical Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aura</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reiki</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Oils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Lives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamorphic Technique</td>
<td>(touching the spinal reflex points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiccan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More explicitly, the terms used place the metaphysical discourse within the social practices of a traditional or historic faith, probably more akin to shamanism which is about communication with the spirit world, or possibly pantheism (God is All and All is God). There may be an element of both of these approaches, and more, within the identified metaphysical discourse.

To delve deeper into this metaphysical discourse holds a theological and interpretative challenge as the actual beliefs of those marketing their GHEI services are not clearly stated. So, to achieve any level of interpretation, it is important to consider the messages received from the graphics alongside the text. The metaphysical discourse is enacted in the visual media through the use of Celtic religious symbolism, as portrayed by the pictured images and supported by the text. This interpretation is supported through what is known of the Celts as provided by MacCulloch (2003), and the content of the website:
• Use of Welsh language with words such as capel (chapel) and llyn (lake),
• Pictures of a Neolithic burial chamber (burial rituals – ancient belief and custom)
• Picture of daybreak, lakes and mountains, (worship of the natural world)
• Pictures of white horses (Goddess Epona and fertility)
• Geographical location of the GHEI centre in Wales

This symbolism ‘talks’ of the ancient wisdom of the Iron Age Celts who lived in Wales over 2,000 years ago. The Celtic religion was closely tied to the natural world where Druids are reported to have later been their ‘wise ones’ (MacCulloch 2003 p.293). Very little is really known about the Celts because the Romans are said to have suppressed the culture when they invaded Britain, but their legacy appears to be about human life and its connection to nature.

Whilst it may seem that the metaphysical discourse has been given a specific historical, social, and cultural context relevant in the UK, this can not be stated with any certainty. Ancient Celtic wisdom being realised through horses is the basis of the book by American psychotherapists, McCormick et al (1997) who wrote about the Celtic way of expanding the human soul through the horse. Thus, it has to be acknowledged that knowledge of this particular work may have influenced how GHEI has been portrayed in the UK website.

5.3.1.1.1 Secondary Discourse – UK

The secondary discourse within the UK web pages was also found in the practitioner study. This is a social discourse with a focus on culture, not only a human culture involved in seeking knowledge and insight into life itself, but also of equine social culture where understanding of their ways is a relevant element of what is provided at this centre. This finding fits with the practitioner study where the social discourse was enacted in terms of family and herd as one connected social structure.

The social discourse drawn on includes the terms empowered, relaxed, leadership and assertiveness. The nature of the discourse varied from that of
the practitioner study where the focus was on family style socialisation. The social discourse accounted for in this website has been constructed for marketing purposes. A family style social discourse may not be so appealing to the intended corporate consumer the centre is trying to attract. The social discourse in this context is focused on achievement in terms of the skills required to be an effective team member rather than the family/herd style support, which was the intent of the social discourse in the practitioner study.

The extent of the mental distress discourse surfaced in the practitioner study was not evident in the UK website. In the web pages it was limited to just two words: stress and depression.

5.3.1.2 Dominant Discourse – USA

The USA website shows a primary dominant discourse of Mental Distress. Terms that identify this discourse in the web pages are included in table 18 on the following page.
Table 18: USA Website Terms used in Mental Distress Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Website</th>
<th>Mental Distress Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Clinical Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy/psychotherapist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Healing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety disorder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-therapists/therapists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse Control, Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DSM-IV diagnosis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Mental Health Practitioners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yale Psychiatric Institute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe mental disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mental distress terms used in this website centre on psychiatric **diagnosis** in relation to **DSM-IV** such as **depression**, **Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder**, **Impulse Control**, and **Anxiety Disorder**. Terms relating to **treatment** were included such as **assessment**, **treatment plans**, **treatment**, and **impulse control**. As well as terms relating to **systems** set up to authenticate psychiatric diagnosis and treatment such as **Chief Clinical Officer**, **Psychotherapist**, **Nurse**, **Licensed Mental Health Practitioner**, **Community Mental Health**, and **Yale Psychiatric Institute**.

In relation to the authenticating systems talk inherent within the overall mental distress discourse, there are some interesting parallels between the organisational structure and culture centred on mental distress and the organisational structure and culture surrounding equines in this website. Table 19 on the following page highlights these parallel discourses by relating pictorial and textual data from the USA website to the more generalised literature on mental distress.
## Table 19: Parallels between Mental Distress and Equine Industry Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image from US Website</th>
<th>Interpretative Vehicle/key word</th>
<th>Equine Industry</th>
<th>Mental Distress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Pictures of horses showing the use of halters, mouth bits and tack to control the horse and make them perform to expected equine standards e.g. dressage</td>
<td>Use of interactions and medication to ‘control’ an individual, or for client to maintain self control, so they can perform to normalised social standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Containment</td>
<td>Pictures of horses contained within a paddock, stable, barn, arena, fenced field, or tied up</td>
<td>Clients contained within an institution, label, diagnosis or law (sectioning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Power held by industries such as the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association or by individuals perceived to be socially elite within the GHEI world</td>
<td>Control by socially elite i.e. doctors, psychiatrists, legal system, and knowledgeable experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>Riding establishment with standardised equipment, stables, and bars</td>
<td>Psychiatric establishment with standardised equipment, psychiatric structures, drug companies, and social structures that ‘bar’ those with mental illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Legal status</td>
<td>No legal standing other than an object that is owned by a human or organisation</td>
<td>Reduced legal standing if sectioned, power of attorney is enforced, or if mental capacity is questioned. Clients are objectified as their freedom of choice is removed under certain sections of the Mental Health Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>Winning is depicted in the graphics from rosettes being given to pictures of various awards being received or given</td>
<td>Successful clients are perceived to be those that ‘win’ the ‘fight’ or the ‘battle’ against mental illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image of equestrian scene" /></td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Horses have no voice and rely on advocates to ‘speak’ for them. In this website the horses ‘speak’ about themselves through human interpretation of their biography.</td>
<td>Those with mental distress rely on advocates to make their voices heard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Co-founder of Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association

Great Strides bought Linus from Kathy

Click here to Email Linus.
Click here to see his full bio.
Public Perception

Horses are described as therapists through the text yet are pictured as held with halters and ropes and at times with a tight grip (as pictured). Therefore mixed message of the horse being a therapist yet needing to be controlled because they are a dangerous, unpredictable, wild, uncontained, free spirit.

Client depicted as dangerous, unpredictable, uncontrollable, wild, uncontained, free spirit

Refer to work by Philo et al (1996) who looked at media coverage and mental illness where negative images of clients experiencing mental distress received headline treatment.

It can be seen from table 19 that the USA website contains many parallels between mental distress systems and equine systems. Take into account the findings from the previous study that a mental distress discourse was apparent in all GHEI practitioners to a greater or lesser extent. These parallel attributes of horse and client could be used to understand how practitioners could account for naturally turning to GHEI through their joint experiences with horse and clients. This also fits with a conclusion drawn from the Literature Review chapter that within existing GHEI literature there is an assumption that involving horses is good for clients (section 2.4).

Parker (1992) states that discourses not only describe the social world, they also categorise it. Therefore, it appears that practitioners may categorise mental health systems and equine systems in a similar way leading to a belief that working with both clients and horses in the same way (section 4.4.2.1.2) is a natural progression.

Fairclough (2003) offers further insight into categorisation when he writes that differences in discourses can be partly a matter of key words but these key words, or interpretative vehicles, are actually different classification systems. Equivalence between discourses shape how people think and act as social agents (Fairclough 2003). Thus, the equivalence between the equine and mental distress worlds could have led GHEI practitioners, as social agents, to draw on discourses aligned to an existing category they already know and understand.

In relation to the overall question for this thesis on how GHEI is discursively constructed any equivalence between discourse on mental distress and
discourse on the equine industry could be a matter of how those systems are classified. It could be theorised that familiarity with one classification system such as mental distress can lead to the belief that a similar system, such as the equine industry, feels right in bringing them together.

As Foucault (1978) notes, power operates by legitimising some discourses and displacing others. The power inherent in the mental distress discourse in the USA website is legitimised by its privileging within academia as scientific. Once labelled as scientific, the mental distress discourse has the effect of displacing metaphysical discourse as an other. Mental illness systems have the authoritative and valued technological knowledge.

5.3.1.2.1 Secondary Discourse – USA

The secondary discourse within this website is one of Finance. This discourse was exemplified by the following terms used on the website (table 20).

Table 20: USA Website Terms used in Finance Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Website</th>
<th>Finance Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non –profit</td>
<td>Fiscal accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raised rates of 150%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>Advertising revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena for rent</td>
<td>Keep costs down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate now</td>
<td>Rates that are comparable with psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sliding fee scale</td>
<td>Fee assistance programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations are tax deductible</td>
<td>Free farm tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free farm tour</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Tack sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through a UK cultural lens, this mixture of mental distress and financial discourses at first appears at odds, but it does in fact offer an example of how the social and cultural context of GHEI is replicated in the two websites. The financial discourse was woven throughout the different sections of the USA website, whereas in the UK website there is just one small section on costs stating how much per hour. Sourcing the costs involved in mental distress treatments in the USA is generally through insurance or private funding, whilst treatment is generally free in the UK if prescribed through the NHS. However, this is not an adequate explanation for this finding if we take the primary discourse in this UK website as metaphysical. The costs involved in metaphysical interactions, such as GHEI, have to be privately funded. So, it appears that the UK culture is to limit any financial discourse. This is a finding which supports the work of the anthropologist Fox (2004), who reported that the British resist talk of money and have elaborate social processes in place to avoid direct discussion of anything financial.

5.3.1.3 Dominant Discourses – Summary

In summary different primary discourses have been surfaced, both of which can be related to findings from the practitioner study. The UK website has a primary metaphysical discourse whilst the USA website is one of mental distress. The USA website reveals parallels between the categorisation of mental distress and equine systems (table 19), thereby reproducing dominant discourses and power dynamics.

The UK website appears to show that the practitioner discourses have been drawn on to fit the social and cultural context of the UK. This is achieved by utilising the unique historical and spiritual surroundings of where the centre is situated.

Financial discourse was woven throughout the text in the USA website but is barely apparent in the UK website and did not feature at all in the practitioner study. This reluctance to discuss finance is culturally significant. It appears UK
practitioners, in this one centre at least, are beginning to discursively construct GHEI in a way that is culturally and socially significant.

5.3.2 How is this discourse maintained?

In the practitioner study it was seen that discourses were maintained through the roles adopted by the practitioner, the client and the horse. This differed according to which primary discourse a practitioner offered. Thus, the mental distress discursive practitioner took the expert role whilst the metaphysical discursive practitioner saw the horse as the expert.

The two websites involved in this study however both show the role of the practitioner in the mental distress and metaphysical discourses as being the one with the knowledge, which is the expert. The knowledge is either as an expert in mental distress as in the USA website, or as an eclectic expert of psychic knowledge, equine culture, energies, and crystals as in the UK website. This is further explored in table 21 on the following page.
Table 21: USA and UK Website Comparison of Roles in Maintaining Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>US Website</th>
<th>UK Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Role</td>
<td>To have an expert knowledge of mental illness diagnosis and treatment (<em>DSM IV diagnosis</em>)&lt;br&gt;To provide details of their expertise and skills in relation to treating mental illness (<em>Licensed mental health practitioners</em>)&lt;br&gt;Expert knowledge of running a business (<em>fiscal accomplishments</em>)</td>
<td>To have an eclectic expert knowledge of reiki, essential oils, past lives, crystals, and horses&lt;br&gt;To lead client to pre ordained outcomes such as <em>building confidence, team building, or leadership skills</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Role</td>
<td>To be a patient with a diagnosable mental illness (<em>assessment, treatment plans, severe mental disabilities</em>)</td>
<td>To gain an insight into <em>how people really view you</em> through the horse acting as a mirror.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Role</td>
<td>To have different personalities and characteristics that clients can relate to (<em>click here to email Linus</em>)</td>
<td>To have different personalities and characteristics that clients can relate to&lt;br&gt;To reflect back to the client their behaviour – <em>mirror</em>&lt;br&gt;To do what no therapist would dare to do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 will be discussed in more detail in the following section (section 5.3.2.1)

5.3.2.1 Practitioner Role

In the metaphysical discourse drawn on by those in the practitioner study, the role of the practitioner was to act as a catalyst for whatever was needed. In the metaphysical discourse within the UK website, the role of the practitioner appears to be leading the client towards pre ordained outcomes such as *building confidence, team building or developing leadership skills*.

This listing of specific outcomes has the effect of confining potential consumer expectations, rather than working with individualised expressed need, the
latter being what the metaphysical discourses appeared to construct in the practitioner study. This ambiguity across the metaphysical discourses may be related to the fact that the UK website is a medium used for marketing purposes. In this context corporate bodies and individuals would want to know what they are actually paying for in terms of outcomes rather than some perceived vague notion of ‘whatever is needed’. This serves to illustrate how the same discourses can be constructed differently according to audience expectations.

The practitioner role in the USA website is one of an expert in mental illness conditions and to illustrate this each therapist provides a detailed biography of their past experiences, knowledge and skills. This expert knowledge and skills in mental illness is combined with their expert knowledge in horses and expert knowledge of running a business. As a website marketing their services this is clearly important to demonstrate in the ‘selling’ of GHEI. By comparison the UK website offers little in depth insight into facilitator background, experience or qualifications. However this may be more related to the fact that in the USA, GHEI practice is situating itself in the field of mental illness which pitches it against a much larger field of expertise, knowledge, and ultimately power, especially in terms of acquiring funding. Conversely, it may be related more to cultural identity. As noted by Fox (2004) it is considered socially unacceptable in British culture to promote oneself.

### 5.3.2.2 Client Role

The role of the client in the website metaphysical discourse is more specific in relation to that identified in the practitioner study. In the practitioner study the client role in the metaphysical discourse was identified as one of needing to connect and experience love. Gaining insight was an element of the client role which was seen to be facilitated by the horse acting as a live metaphor. Processing of this metaphor was internalised by the client. They were not necessarily assisted verbally in this by the practitioner. In the practitioner study, the practitioners were not specific about what this insight might be, as it was seen to be individual to each client. Yet, the role of the client, accounted for in the UK website, is to gain an insight into *how people really view you* through the horse acting as a *mirror*. This mirror metaphor will be discussed
later in this chapter (section 5.3.8) as it is relevant to both USA and UK discourses. It involves the horse reflecting back the client’s behaviour. The client role is to look into that mirror and view what is reflected.

The client role in the USA website is one of a patient with a diagnosable mental illness. The authoritative knowledge present in this website is privileged, thereby stifling any possible embodied knowledge that may be present in their clients. The website constructs a hierarchical and structured environment where each person knows their place and each horse their own stable. It is not clear where the patient/client role begins and ends in this.

5.3.2.3 Horse Role

It seems whatever the primary discourse; the horse role is the same in both the UK and USA website. The role of the horse in the UK website builds on the horse role identified in the metaphysical discourse in the practitioner study where differing personalities of horses were alluded to. A similar process takes place in the USA website where horse biographies are provided and the horses can be emailed. So, both the USA and the UK websites provide us with a deeper understanding of the role horses can play in the maintenance of both the metaphysical and mental distress discourses through accounting for personalities and characteristics constructed for the horse.

The descriptions of the temperaments and preferences of the horses in both websites are provided, where each horse has been given a different role according to their stated personality traits. There are three schools of thought in ascribing personalities to animals. One is that it is simply projection on the part of the person describing the personality (Poster 1989), another view is that it is anthropomorphism (Page 2001), and the third consideration is that they do indeed have differing personalities and temperaments (Morris, Gale and Howe 2002).

The term projection is psychotherapeutic in nature and according to Poster (1989) refers to the unconscious externalisation of aspects of personality such as feelings, thoughts, needs, conflicts and attitudes. Jung (1958), felt that
projection involved projecting our shadow selves onto others. Gross (1992) simply defines projection as an individual projecting their feelings or perceptions onto another. The development of projection in childhood was first documented by Piaget (1982) who theorised that children are basically egotistical and will project their feelings onto others, whilst remaining unaware their experiences may differ from the world around them. This fundamental basis of projection is based on an internal world, or constructivism, where the underlying principle is that individuals project what they themselves know and understand from their own experiences.

In the psychotherapeutic approach to GHEI, asking a client to ascribe personality traits to the horses is part of the therapeutic process where there is an assumption that any description will say more about the client than the horse. Therefore, attributing characteristics and personality traits to the horses on a website to be read by a client prior to any interactions could negate this particular approach.

The prevailing academic view is that anthropomorphism, or ascribing human feelings and characteristics to animals, is not credible within the scientific world (Page 2001). For example, Sauvage Rumbaugh (1986) who worked with primates was accused of over interpretation of data due to anthropomorphism and was subsequently vilified by academics. She ascribed personalities to the chimps she was observing as part of her scientific research. There is a tension between what is considered scientific and what is observed on a regular basis in books, on the television, and in films where cartoons, fictional and real animals are constructed with human voices, characters, and feelings.

Both the USA and the UK websites assigned human feelings and characteristics to their horses, but it could be argued that the USA website was specifically aiming this section at children as they stated their client group was aged eight years upwards:

- *Josh has never got a cross word to say*,
- *Mr Rhee is best friends with Linus*,
- *Remy is like Houdini*,
- *He thinks this is pretty funny*

This anthropomorphic discourse conflicts with the scientific basis of the primary discourse of mental distress discourse. Although it identifies a
hegemonic role the horses play in maintaining practitioners as experts, it also raises the potential for practice to be disregarded as unscientific. Efforts to align GHEI within the seemingly scientific based mental health model may therefore be undermined. Consider for a moment the equivalent of human feeling and characteristics being given to another form of treatment such as an anti-psychotic drug.

The corollary to the debate on anthropomorphism is that there is now research into personality traits of horses which shows a shift away from the ideology that it is unacceptable. For example, Morris, Gale and Howe (2002) utilised a human personality inventory scale to assess horses. The results led the researchers to conclude that horses do have personality attributes. There is a movement to acknowledge that animals do have personality traits, as sanctioned by evidence that academic research is taking place to inform our thinking, rather than simply dismissing any such concept as anthropomorphic.

The UK website had given their horses personality traits which define their individual roles:

- softie
- wily
- excellent judge of character
- sweet natured
- abused but now sane

The USA website had taken this concept of personality traits further than the UK site by describing the likes and dislikes of their horses which included their recent reading material such as *Harry Potter* or their hobbies such as *chess* or *surfing*. The effect of this account is to move the debate about projection, anthropomorphism and equine personality traits to the realms of a fantasy discourse.

Highlighting equine likes and dislikes in the websites provides an insight into how these metaphysical and mental distress discourses are maintained through the roles adopted. Practitioners would in all likelihood not describe themselves as a being *honest* and *abused*, nearly having a *nervous breakdown* and now being *sane*, as the horses have been described. They would also be...
unlikely to list their likes, dislikes or probably even their hobbies. The practitioners in the USA and UK web pages describe themselves according to their qualifications and experience and not their personality. So, it appears the role of the horses in both the USA and UK is to facilitate this level of detail about their perceived personalities. Detail that is not provided about the human practitioners as not many practitioners would be likely to state on a marketing website that they have been abused in the past but are now sane.

The horse role it seems is to live up to their personality expectations in the minds of the clients who now have pre-conceived ideas about each horse. The horse role is very specific. It is to do what no therapist would dare to do (UK website). Any speculation on this ‘daring’ would be subjective, although it could be argued that it relates to touch, as identified in the practitioner study, and reflecting back an emotion such as fear. However, as it is not expanded on in the website, it may also include kicking a client and defecating in the therapeutic space.

5.3.2.4 Roles – Summary

In summary, there are similarities between the USA and UK websites in how the horse role is maintained in both the metaphysical and the mental distress discourses. This is exemplified by providing the horse with a detailed personality and past to enhance their therapeutic style role.

In both the USA and the UK websites, the practitioner role remains one of an expert but in differing fields of expertise. The USA mental health practitioner is one of an expert competing against ever more important experts in a field that is exemplified by hierarchies and privileged through knowledge and power. The practitioner is also the expert in competing for financial resources. In the UK, practitioner expertise lies in their eclectic metaphysical knowledge and application of equine skills.

Finally, the client role, outside of being a patient (USA) and gaining insight (UK), in both websites can be summarised as one of absence. Whilst the USA website details who their clients are, children aged eight and up, teens and adults, and the UK website identifies corporate bodies or individuals as client
groups, neither offers detailed testimonies from clients or a section of the website that is dedicated to hearing their voices, experiences or accounts.

**5.3.3 Are there contesting discourses?**

As noted in the previous section, one apparent contesting discourse is contained in the USA website within the predominant mental distress discourse. It was noted that ascribing hobbies to a horse results in fantasy, for example, Griggs (the horse) *is reading Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Building on this concept, the social construction of fantasy is explored by Fine (2003) who looked at gender differentiation in fantasy games. He noted that few women indulge in fantasy as adults, but as children they have more of an interest in imaginative play (Fine 2003 p.63). It seems the fantasy discourse involved in horses reading books, playing chess, or surfing may function as an engagement medium for children, but it could alienate women as adults.

In the UK website there appears to be a contesting discourse between the promotion of the term *natural horsemanship* and the pictures of horses shown wearing head collars, leggings, rugs, bathed, and contained either within a stable or an arena. There are no pictures of the horses together as a free ranging herd roaming the pictured mountains. Whilst *natural* the horses are very much contained. This is further exemplified by a picture on the website of a mountain but taken through a wire fence. It seems there are degrees of natural.

This conflict provides mixed messages. On the one hand there is the metaphysical discourse of history, nature, spirit and a sense of wildness afforded by the location and the involvement of horses in the UK. But there is also the discourse of containment, human control and a level of contrivance through only having white horses. Whilst a potential client might metaphorically strive to be a strong free spirited individual roaming the wild and beautiful environment that provides for their every need along with their connected herd, the reality is they are contained within socially constructed structures, much like the horses depicted within the web pages. Therefore, the resulting metaphysical discourse serves to function as locating GHEI within
human aspirations to wildness and nature, but also contain it within the paradigm of safety and control.

5.3.4 How does the version of reality the discourses maintain mesh with discourses in other contexts?

The absence of a particular discourse was surfaced. Overt text in both the UK and USA websites did not account for any discourse on risk. This is understandable in terms of marketing GHEI, as any discussion about risk might deter clientele. However, being alongside horses does hold inherent risks both to humans and horses as each communicates in separate ways. Horse language is subtle and can be missed or misunderstood by a human observer even when they have expertise in being around horses. Horse communication involves a lot of posturing such as a wrinkled nostril or the lifting of a hind leg and when these subtle signs are not responded to appropriately they can react by biting, kicking, rearing or barging. Humans pose similar risks to horses through not understanding their specific equine needs.

Risks do exist, yet this lack of overt acknowledgement of these risks in these websites is also apparent in the generalised literature on GHEI. By omitting any debate on risk, there is the potential for practice to be eulogised and constructed only on the perceived advantages of GHEI. Yet, as risk discourse becomes ever more prominent in other fields of practice, this lack of overt text on risk in these websites calls into question the function of discourses on risk. For example, Lupton (1993) believes the function of risk discourse in a health context is to apportion blame to the victim. This is achieved by defining socially unacceptable behaviour, such as smoking or drinking, thereby exerting authority over the body politic.

With this understanding of the function of risk discourse, an account of risk can be surfaced in both websites. However, these are not accounts of physical risk through interaction with the horses. In fact, both websites bear out the function of risk discourse identified by Lupton (1993). For the UK website the risks that surface are those risks involved when not facing yourself in the mirror of the horse, of not seeing yourself as others see you, or in not liking
Thus, the risks presented are related to the client not participating in GHEI, rather than risk being held by the centre, practitioners, or horses.

In a similar vein in the USA website, risks are identifiable in the eligibility criteria for receiving a service. This again involved client risk to self, or blame. Thus, if a client does not have sufficient control over their emotions and behaviors so as not to be disruptive in the overall barn environment they are not eligible for a service. Despite the service being marketed as a treatment for emotional and behavioural disorders, the risks involved in these types of behaviours are just too risky.

Risk discourse was equally minimalised in the practitioner study. The topic schedule for the practitioner interviews had to be changed specifically to ensure that practitioners considered any negative aspects to GHEI. Risks to clients from unskilled practitioners or unsafe stable environments were not reported.

This is understandable as GHEI undergoes a period of growth and evolution. Depicting risks in published literature may not be an effective marketing ploy. Yet, by ignoring risk discourse, or at worst presenting risks entirely as a client centred issue, the real risk is that GHEI will not account for potential harm.

5.3.5 What kind of world is conjured up?

5.3.5.1 Website World – UK

The world conjured up in the UK web pages is one of therapy, but not therapy as in the mental illness context. This is a world where all kinds of therapeutic practices are offered under the terminology of holism such as reiki, crystals and metamorphic technique. It is not a world where horses are the main focus as other holistic style interactions are included, but they are a part of an approach. What part is hard to define as it appears it is the privilege of the paying client to determine this through what they choose as a therapeutic modality from an eclectic menu.
5.3.5.2 Website World - USA

In the USA website, despite a secondary discourse of finance, the actual costs involved are not stated. Yet, the objects of value are detailed. This includes self esteem, body awareness and the ability to communicate in an effective manner. It also involves relaxation, journaling and painting, learning to be assertive, dealing with frustration, and trust.

5.3.5.3 Consumer Worlds

Both of the website worlds provide an account of consumerism. In both, money changes hands. Money passes from the client, or the consumer, to the practitioner. Money is the currency for knowledge to be imparted from one person to another. The costs involved in this knowledge transfer are clearly stated in the UK website at an hourly rate of £25.00. Payment is therefore exchanged for objects of value to the client consumer. Examples of these objects of value extracted from the text in the UK GHEI website include changes in the consumer, positive mental health, knowledge on how to work alongside horses, or the development of leadership skills. However, whilst the client pays the therapist in money, the client also needs to pay the therapist with their personal time and effort as well. A simple exchange of a monetary resource will not suffice in achieving any anticipated outcome.

Frohmann (1992) wrote that in the ideology of consumer capitalist discourse the market is said to offer goods generated in response to the perception of need and where the complexities of social life requires expert interventions. The perception of need in the context of this study is a client requirement for emotional wellbeing delivered by experts, be they horses, people, or both. However GHEI is not consumerism of a product but of resources such as the horses and location, of the knowledge, time and effort of the practitioners and of the monetary exchange, time and effort of the client. The aim conjured up by the texts and the graphics is to sell this world to select customers. This selling in the USA takes place by denoting winning. The majority of the
pictures on the USA website show an award being presented or received (Image 1).

Image 1: USA Website – What kind of World?

The function of the discourses in both the UK and USA websites appears, not just to inform about GHEI, but to provide an argument for the consumer to purchase this particular interaction from this particular centre. This is demonstrated in the picture in Image 1 depicting an award ceremony. The horse in this picture appears incidental and outside of its herd. It is difficult to tell from its body language if it is relaxed, bored, or lethargic. The clothing of the women is at odds with the equine environment, especially the risks involved with wearing open toed sandals around horses. What appears to matter here, is not the horse, the treatment, or the comfort and safety of the individuals, but the award.

The UK website does not have a focus on awards or winning. The images depict people as connected with their surroundings in terms of their clothing and the involvement of the horses:

Image 2: UK Website – What kind of World?

However, the world depicted in the website remains primarily to market GHEI and such shows a world of order, cleanliness, and control as depicted by the
halters and horse boots, as well as good manners as they all stand together. There is a general air of relaxation about the horses who appear interested in what is going on around them, but they have all been well prepared for the image, as demonstrated by the groomed horses and their matching rugs.

Whilst there are similarities noted in the websites between the USA and the UK in addressing consumerism, this appears to be set in an appropriate cultural and societal context. The USA world promotes consumerism in GHEI through selling treatment and depicting winning and awards, whilst the UK promotes consumerism through order, cleanliness, dressing appropriately and good manners. How far this portrayal of the differences in consumer discourse applies overall to the differences between USA and UK construction of GHEI is questionable. Notwithstanding, the effect of these differences in consumer discourse is to demonstrate that UK practitioners in this website at least appear to be constructing GHEI to meet their own specific cultural and social requirements.

5.3.6 What kind of people is present in the world? How about people least likely to be associated with this world?

5.3.6.1 Website World – UK

The texts and pictures in the website allude to a particular consumer, or client group the centre is trying to attract. The impression of clients accessing this service involves those who subscribe to the principles behind this particular metaphysical version of GHEI practice, and who can afford to attend.

The metaphysical discourse does not locate this centre within statutory service provision such as a mental illness or social care. This is in contrast to the discourses in the practitioner study where some practitioners had been commissioned to provide GHEI for clients of statutory services such as social care. This is not to say that respondents in the practitioner study did not hold with these particular metaphysical accounts, but if they did, they were neutralised within discourses that held the potential to attract commissioners or possible clients. It is suggested that commissioners of statutory services
would be less likely to purchase services from this particular centre, due to its overt alternative approach, combined with a lack of evidence of effectiveness.

The discourse at this centre locates the people present as solvent adults with the same beliefs as portrayed in the website. These might be people for whom the mental health services have failed to engage. They might be people who have not been able to receive a service as thresholds for accessing statutory provision become increasingly inflated. They might be the ‘worried well’, a term used to imply clients are acquiring too much health knowledge (Diamond 2003). Power dynamics are inherent in ensuring the worried well are returned to the authoritative fold through the application of the technical term ‘subsyndromal syndrome’ to label them, but not provide them with a service. Alternatively, the clients in this world may be present because they have increasing freedom in accessing services they choose rather than their health or social care professional (personalised budgets). One further group of clients that may be present are corporate organisations who are looking for something different in relation to team development.

The pictorial representations in this website show images of what kind of people are present in UK Website World (Image 3).

**Image 3: UK Website – What kind of People?**

Image 3 shows a picture of a possible client standing in front of a horse offering her hand palm upwards to the horse, which is a symbol of openness. She is looking directly at the horse and away from the camera which shows her attention is completely focused on the horse. Her body language shows a slight nervousness as she is actually turned away from the horse at an angle and has slightly hunched shoulders, whilst the horse itself appears with soft eyes and ears slightly drooping. All signs of equine relaxation. Therefore, the
picture shows a paradox between relaxation and a slight nervousness whilst the comment underlying the picture reveals the client as being empowered by being able to direct the horses movements just by using her body language.

Being able to direct a large powerful animal by human body movement alone is a unique selling point. Yet, we do not know how this translates to client world once she has left the centre. So this UK Website World is only ‘real’ within this centre. There is no evidence in the web pages to show this empowerment extends beyond its boundaries.

Within the pictures on this UK website, only women are represented. The two practitioners and possibly a female client. All three females are Caucasian and aged between 30 to 50 years. So, the images provide an impression that the world is inhabited only by women, to the exclusion of the male gender or anyone outside of the Caucasian female age range pictured. In this world, the pictures have an effect of feeding the female stereotypical image of the presence of a passive woman needing help and assistance with her emotions.

5.3.6.2 Website World – USA

In contrast the USA website does show males (Image 4).

Image 4: USA Website – What kind of People?

However, the men in this case are not clients but are dignitaries attending a ribbon cutting ceremony where the majority are male. These dignitaries are stated as including the president of a horse council, board members, and county council members. So, males are present in the USA world. However,
these males have control and power in overseeing the centre and its activities; they are not the recipients of the interactions.

5.3.6.3 Website World – Summary

With regards to tracing the origins of discourses to understand underlying conventions, seen through one lens, the sexist ideology inherent in both websites has a long history of Christian discourse. In this, woman was created secondary to man from Adam’s rib. Whilst Rousseau was writing that women’s entire education should be focused on pleasing men (Watkins, Ruedea and Rodriguez 1994), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) was building the foundations of feminism. Since that time, global discourses on feminism have resulted in differing discourses that have then merged and evolved into different strands of feminism. One example of this is in the USA where discourse on rights for women was initially aligned to rights for Afro Americans. The discourses have evolved over the years into separate strands such as radical, social or liberal feminism.

In relating this vast literature on feminist discourses to the findings in this study, it is worth looking through a Feminist Therapy lens. This lens acknowledges that ‘female’ is constructed within a social, cultural, historical and political context whereby an egalitarian relationship between therapist and client is the basis of the approach (Byram Fowles 2008). Applying a feminist approach to GHEI would involve the client understanding that power does not come from the therapist or the horse, but can be found within their own self. In other words, the client is the expert. However, the discourses in both the UK and USA websites place the practitioner as the expert, thereby negating any egalitarian or client centred approach. This may of course be related to the consumerist constructions in the websites whereby clients pay for expertise. Consumer discourse is increasingly shaping how the social world is constructed. According to Brownlie et al.(1999) consumer discourses reveal the unconscious expressions of social structures. Thus, whilst GHEI practitioners may claim to empower individual (female) clients, the social structures remain that subordinate them.
Analysis of text in both websites showed structures that subordinate. In the USA website those least likely to be associated with this GHEI world are:

- emotionally rational people who are in control of their lives
- individuals with no problems regarding their self esteem, mental health, or emotional or behavioural issues

Whilst in the UK website those least likely to be associated are:

- those who have leadership qualities
- those who do not need help, are not passive, do not need empowerment, or do not care how others view them

The social construction of women as emotional, passive, irrational, and not suited for leadership (Burr 1995) is reflected in both these websites, and across two different cultures.

5.3.7 What are the important things, ideas and/or tasks in the sort of world created?

This section is divided into the important things in the UK website, and the important things in the USA website.

5.3.7.1 Important Things – UK

The UK website shows only white horses and states that white is the colour choice for new beginnings. How the colour of the horses is important to the world created by the websites is open to interpretation according to individual experience but there are some commonalities and also some cultural influences. In films, the hero or heroine is usually riding the white horse whilst the villain rides the black horse. Mythical horses such as Unicorns and Pegasus are usually portrayed as white, and white horses are symbolic of the ancient Celts. White is linked with virginity, peace, and surrender.
The Uffington White horse carved in the hillside of the Berkshire Downs is thought to be around three thousand years old. The white horses depicted in the UK web pages are also set into an ancient context through the graphic images of Neolithic burial chambers.

This discourse contrives to set GHEI in a historical, social and cultural context within the UK.

One further point of note of what is important in this world is that created by the font used in the website whereby the speech is heard. Take as an example the use of CAPITALS which in text based language can be interpreted as shouting. So, the typeface used for the main body of text in the UK material is the voice of the website. To aide any analysis of voice in text, Showker (2008) suggests listening to voices of famous people to determine what typeface their voice indicates.

The typeface voice used in the UK site is Times New Roman. This is the emotionless voice preferred by academia and indicates conformity. This is the voice of 'middle England' which is polite and informative. Loxley (2004 p.134)
describes the font as ‘handsome, clinical and detached’. The tension in this typeface voice is that some of the language used in the website does not necessarily bear out this conformity. The use of the word, *wiccan* as an example implies nature worship (Encarata World English Dictionary 2008). It also has connotations of neo paganism, witchcraft, spells, magic and the occult.

5.3.7.2 Important Things – USA

In contrast to the UK white horses, the USA website depicts an Appaloosa or a ‘painted’ horse. The paint was, and probably still is, the horse of choice for the Native American, thereby lending the USA discourse a cultural context in the same way the white horse symbolises a culture in the UK website.

![Image 7: USA Website – Important Things - Painted Horse](image)

This construction relating to equine symbolism has been apparent in many cultures down through the ages. Although the Spaniards are reported to have bought the horse to the Americas, it was not long before the paint was seen to epitomise the strength and constitution the Native Americans were seeking (Trailtribes 2009). This strength and constitution appears equally applicable to contemporary involvement of the horse in GHEI in the USA.

The type face used in the USA website is Arial. In a study that sought to explore outpatient’s choice of font, 70% of those surveyed preferred Arial (Eyles, Kelly and Scmuck 2003). Therefore, this choice of font fits with the dominant mental distress discourse in relation to the preferences of ‘patients’. 
5.3.7.3 Important Things – Summary

To summarise, GHEI appears to be accounted for according to social and cultural influences, as demonstrated through the presentation of white horses in the UK and a painted horse in the USA. However, in the UK, whilst the textual voice is socially appropriate and conventional, there is a subsidiary dialogue that challenges this middle England conformity. Notwithstanding, this dialogue is culturally specific in relation to the beliefs of an ancient people whose culture was suppressed through Roman invasion.

5.3.8 What connotations does this particular word have?

One of the terms used in the both the UK and USA websites is the horse is a mirror. As this is a common term across much of the contemporary literature on GHEI, it is worth exploring the connotations involved in its usage. The function of the term appears to be to provide a rationale for the inclusion of the horse in therapeutic activities as opposed to any other animal. However, it is not clear what it actually implies. This lack of clarity means it is hard to place in any one of the primary discourses.

Parker (1992) advocated free association when exploring connotations. Taking the horse is a mirror as a central metaphor inhabiting differing discourses shaping GHEI practice, a free association approach to the term was applied based on metaphor theory. Parker (1992) states that metaphor can help us understand the interrelationship between discourses, therefore, it is included here to aide understanding of the discursive construction of GHEI.

The approach in this study to deconstructing this metaphor involved tracing the origins of the term and then applying structured free association through the use of Symbolic Modelling (Tompkins and Lawley 2000). A mind map was subsequently constructed from the modelling.

The origins of the term the horse is a mirror’ is uncertain although the UK website explored in this study ascribes it to an old Arabic saying. The
Alternative Horse Society (2009) also use the term the horse is a mirror of your soul. Bartsch (2006) looked at the Mirror of the Soul metaphor, albeit without the horse, and noted the mirror metaphor shows how complicated discourses first took form. The mirror formed an intersection between the three ancient discourses of risqué, philosophy and science by explaining how an individual was affected by their relationship with their body (scientific), their judgements and passions (risqué) and their relationship with the moral and ethical values of their culture (philosophical). Socrates (469-399 BC) is generally credited with being the originator of the Mirror of the Soul term according to Bartsch (2006 p.2), although it is noted that a number of ancient sources accredit it to 'some wise man'.

It seems that the origins of a metaphor that relates mirrors and horses is untraceable, but what can be ascertained is that the mirror appears to be a symbol for the intersection between different ancient discourses. As previously noted, it is unclear where the term the horse is a mirror fits within the primary discourses surfaced in this study, or the practitioner study.

The second stage of accounting for the horse as a mirror involved the use of Symbolic Modelling reflexively to further explore the term. In this a set of ‘clean’ questions recommended by Tompkins and Lawley (2004) have been used for exploring my personal metaphorical landscapes in relation to the term. The questions have been designed in a therapeutic context not to contaminate client responses but have been used in this case to structure the free association (table 22).
Table 22: Clean Language applied to the Metaphor: Horse as a Mirror

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbolic Modelling – Clean Question</th>
<th>Researcher Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kind of mirror is the horse</td>
<td>The horse is a mirror that sparkles with light, fun, laughter, and purpose. It is a self cleaning mirror where fingerprints do not leave a stain. It has an ornate framework etched in a natural material, crafted by the finest artists, authors and poets, which depict the shared history of mankind and horse. It connects us with what we can see or project into the mirror – something we may have lost or something we wish to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And is there anything else about the mirror?</td>
<td>The mirror has the ability to help us see another reality, to reflect many possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And what kind of reality is that?</td>
<td>It could be any type of reality, past, present or future. A reality not confined by our lifetime alone – only confined by our concept of time and space. It can reflect the ability to think outside of these constraints but we may not be able to see that reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And where is this mirror?</td>
<td>The mirror is in our hearts and minds. Each one of us has this mirror but often we look into it and only see imperfection when we are seeking perfection. The mirror is therefore in our psyche – our souls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And what happens next?</td>
<td>We can critically reflect on the reality that is projected back at us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then what happens?</td>
<td>We can consider if this is the only reality that can be projected or if we can change this reality with our thoughts and language, but we are also confined by that very language, by the intellect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And what happens just before?</td>
<td>Before we find the mirror we are seeking the right doorway – we have to open many doors to find it. The horse may be just one doorway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And where does/could the mirror come from?</td>
<td>The mirror is part of us, but a part we need to discover for ourselves. We need to turn inwards to find it as it can not be bought or gifted. We may only find part of the mirror and not the whole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an intersection between mental distress and metaphysical discourses, it appears that mirror as applied to a horse, is about reflection and projection. It involves the horse providing an image to reflect on and being a vehicle for the projection of alternative realities or lives.

A mind map was constructed from the free association to further explore the implications of any discursive intersection. Figure 4 provides the details of this mind map.
An attempt to categorise the findings from the mind map into the separate metaphysical and mental distress discourses was made. Apart from the grey areas between reflection and projection (i.e. at what point does reflection become projection) there was also a blurring, or an intersection, between metaphysical and mental distress discourses. For example, the mirror (horse) as a doorway to another reality could equally apply to the metaphysical when ontological multiple realities are taken into consideration, as to a mental distress discourse which would seek to reframe experiences to provide a different account.

It seems that the metaphor of a mirror has provided an intersection between discourses since ancient times and continues to inhabit an intersection between more modern discourses in GHEI.
5.3.9 Where does this discourse locate guided human equine interactions/how will this location effect the way these interactions are viewed by clients, professionals and others?

As the locus of this research is on UK practitioner constructions it is important to explore where the UK discourse locate GHEI practice. Unlike the USA website, the discourses in the UK web pages studied did not align GHEI with the provision of mental distress treatment. Instead it accounted for clients who have had their basic needs met and who are seeking self actualisation. The practitioner study accounted for the client as lower down Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need (Maslow 1971) to focus on belonging and esteem. This may be due in part to the UK practitioners who were interviewed working with different client groups than the website centre is aiming for.

The version of metaphysical discourse in the UK website locates practice within an alternative provision to social care or mental illness services. This is not a provision that is privileged within contemporary academic and scientific construction but it is one that appears to be growing. Parallel to the rise in alternative medicine there has been an increase in the requirement for evidence based practice. Barry (2005) proposes this dual rise is in response to the threat an increase in alternative practice brings to the long standing hegemony of medicine. It may be more related to wanting to know that an alternative practice can not actually cause harm to a client. However, there are acceptable treatments that can cause harm and even death, certain medications being one such treatment.

What is privileged as acceptable practice and thus legitimised and what is not, is argued by Foucault (1978) to be constructed through a system of social control. Mental health, illness, empowerment and self actualisation are all socially created concepts that are sustained by social practices. These practices often serve the interests of dominant groups (Burr 2008), and in both the USA and UK websites the dominant group remains the practitioners, whether they account for practice through a mental distress or metaphysical discourse. What is not clear is the meaning clients contribute to these accounts of GHEI.
5.4 Summary of the Website Study

The primary question this thesis accounts for is how is GHEI practice discursively constructed? The secondary question relevant to this specific study was how do UK discursive constructions relate to USA practitioner constructions on GHEI? The findings illustrate there are some similarities between how GHEI is constructed across both cultures, and some differences, all of which lead to a greater understanding of how GHEI practice is discursively constructed in the UK.

Both websites utilised a primary dominant discourse that was found in the practitioner study. This was the metaphysical discourse in the UK website and a mental distress discourse in the USA website. However, neither website demonstrated the same level of weaving of discourses as identified in the practitioner study. Thus the metaphysical discourse in the UK website was not weaved through with mental distress discourse and the mental distress discourse in the USA website was not weaved through with metaphysical discourse. There was an element of social discourse in the UK website but this was based on leadership skills rather than the herd/family social discourse noted in the practitioner study.

Similarities in discursive constructions appear to be that GHEI practice is centred on some level of conformity whilst holding what could be considered a contesting discourse that in essence challenges that conformity. This is hardly a surprising finding in a practice that could be said to challenge conformity by taking clients into stable yards or fields where they are exposed to large animals, mud, dung heaps, stables, flies, horse smells, as well the elements however harsh. Not quite the ivory tower that Jung (1958) envisaged as a therapeutic space.

The portrayal of the role of males as clients was non existent and this was particularly evident in the choice of images presented on both sites. This portrayal only served to feed the stereotypical image of a female client in need of expert assistance to facilitate her mental and emotional wellbeing, whilst males dignified the scene in terms of management and power. In addition, both websites portrayed the role of the horse as a mirror where the term
inhabits the intersection between the metaphysical and mental distress discourses. Here it was identified that the mirror as a metaphor has been at the intersection of discourses since ancient times and continues to serve this function in relation to GHEI. The role of the practitioner in both the UK and USA website worlds is one of expert, but within differing fields of expertise.

In the mental distress discourse, the USA website showed how mental illness institutional practice and the equine industry are categorised in a similar way which served to potentially classify practice as a ‘natural’ progression to those with an understanding of both systems. This equates to the findings from the practitioner study where practitioners from a health background clearly stated that moving to GHEI practice felt right, but they were unable to articulate exactly why.

According to these websites it appears that GHEI has to some level been culturally constructed. In the UK this included evoking historical and cultural discourse around the ancient environment in which the centre is set. Even the use of the selected academic font as a vehicle for the texts provided a UK cultural backdrop. The USA website could be constructed as having a Native American influence through the inclusion of painted horses. It also included a secondary discourse on finance that was not elicited from either the UK practitioners or the UK website.

5.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Website Study

The multi-modality involved in this study provided a rich and valuable insight into how GHEI is constructed. As Barthes (1977) observed, combining language with visual images can lead to an expansion of understanding. Language is time sensitive in showing linear progression, whilst images are space sensitive and this can represent the spatial relationships that language alone can not capture. Multi-modality is a key element in differentiating say narrative or conversation analysis from discourse analysis, because spatial relationships like ethnicity, social class and the environment can be interrogated through the given images as well as text.
Pictures make claims that can not be spelt out verbally and an example from this study is the pictures of horses wearing head collars whilst the text talks about natural horsemanship. This is in keeping with the observations of McMahon and Quinn (1984) where they described an image as a message in code because it requires interpretation through different layers of meaning. Thus, a halter on a horse has one layer of literal meaning as an item to control an animal, yet another layer of meaning would be to question why and how we have constructed the controlling of horses and what this means to us symbolically in terms of social practices. In the analysis, the social practice implications of any discourse on controlling horses was applied symbolically to the controlling of people with experience of mental distress.

Outside of the limitations of subjective interpretation of pictorial representations, one specific limitation of a multi modal analysis of web based materials is the challenges involved when material is removed from the web, when a web resource changes its format, and when additional material is added or updated. This happened in this study when the UK site was completely revamped part way through the analysis and the USA site was updated. This resulted in the original web pages no longer being available electronically.

There is the potential for other competing claims regarding the interpretations offered here. All academic literature is open to claim and counter claim, debate, and critique. This study makes no claims to generalisability, so it is not generalisable to other websites, situations, or people. It is intended to raise consciousness amongst those with an interest in GHEI and create debate about alternative speaking positions. Discourses change, as well as websites. As Powers (2001) claims, discourse analyses are written in order to become re-written. For example, inclusion of the voices of clients may mean the meaning given to GHEI by practitioners are reviewed and revisited.

The following chapter provides an insight into the meaning given to GHEI as accounted for by those participating as a client.
6 Structure of this Chapter

This chapter commences with a rationale for the client study. This is followed by a section on the methods used, which includes the justification for the use of free text diaries with clients experiencing GHEI. The research process is then outlined followed by a section on the findings.

6.1 Rationale for the Client Study

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how GHEI is discursively constructed. The first study examined UK practitioner accounts of GHEI where the weaving of discourses on mental distress, social and the metaphysical were surfaced. It was noted that GHEI practice is more widespread in the USA where organisations have been established to educate, train and help practitioners develop. Therefore, the second study related practitioner accounts in the UK to those surfaced in the USA through an exploration of two websites. It was found that some cultural adaptation to GHEI had taken place. Yet, neither of these studies involved the voices of clients of GHEI, only practitioner representations of their voices.

No research into therapeutic style practice would be complete without the voices of clients providing their account. Therefore, this study investigated the discursive construction of GHEI through the client lens. The research question for this study is *how do clients discursively construct guided human equine interactions?*

It was noted in the practitioner study that a mental distress discourse was apparent in all GHEI practitioners who took part in the study, to a greater or lesser extent. If GHEI is to be predominately ‘classified’ within the overall mental illness category, then this will ultimately have consequences for how
GHEI evolves. Fairclough (2003) offers further insight into discourse classification as he believes the differences in discourses can be partly a matter of key words, but these key words are actually different classification systems. This is an important consideration in a study involving accounts exploring how GHEI is ultimately discursively classified. For example, using a predominant mental distress discourse with its inherent classification system for dis-ease diagnosis, can lead to different belief systems about mental illness which will have consequences for practice.

It was also noted in the practitioner study that a difference in the discourses involved in GHEI may be in how those discourses position participants. Practitioners, clients and the horses were positioned in an interaction either as experts, facilitators, or as catalysts. What is not known is where clients place themselves in this human-equine interaction and the meaning they give to this positioning.

Client voices may be able to provide insight into which direction GHEI should travel into the future. For example, differences in classification of GHEI practice became further apparent in the previous study on websites. The USA website was focused on GHEI as a treatment for mental ‘disorder’ whilst the UK website saw GHEI as a means of achieving personal insight and self actualisation. Whilst human interaction with the horses in both these websites remained the common theme, the classification of the interaction differed.

As nurses, social workers, therapists, counsellors and teachers increasingly start to involve horses in their practice, it becomes even more imperative to, not only try and understand why this might be happening, but to account for the meaning given to this by clients. The literature review noted that the voices of recipients of GHEI are muted within the available academic literature, with a growing tendency for practitioners and researchers to report findings from a positivistic and privileged perspective. So, this final study looks at client discursive constructions as the key recipients of practice.

The methodology adopted for this study remains the same as for the two previous studies, social constructionism and discourse analysis. Therefore, the next section details the methods used in the Client Study.
6.2 METHODS

In this section the research process is outlined which includes information on the research tool used, ethical considerations, research governance, recruitment of participants, data collection and data management.

The aim of this client study is to provide an account of how clients discursively give meaning to their experience of GHEI. The extent to which dominant discourses are reflected in the accounts of clients and how sensitive these accounts are to change over the period of time they are involved in GHEI is not known. For example, ‘leakage’ of privileged discourses into client language may be one such influence. Leakage of terminology has been demonstrated in the mental health field where authoritative language has now become common day parlance. Terms such as depressed may be a definable mental illness with set criteria for psychiatric diagnosis, but it has also become a term used outside of its diagnostic constraints. Therefore, a research tool that is sensitive to capturing change in discourses was required in order to capture language use at any point in time. One research tool that facilitates recording of events over a period of time, but as close as possible to when the event occurred, is diaries.

6.2.1 Diaries

Burns and Grove (2001) define a diary as a record of events maintained by a subject over a period of time, the contents of which are then analysed by a researcher. Diaries can be kept as paper journals, computerised word or web versions, blogs, or audio and video diaries.

There are different ways of using diaries as a research instrument. The simplest way of categorising diaries is either as structured which is generally quantitative, or Free Text which is qualitative. In a review of the literature to determine the value of diary keeping in health and social research, Elliot (1997) concluded they were a neglected qualitative research tool. During the 1990's, dairies remained primarily a source of structured quantative investigation (Symon 1998). However, over the past decade there has been a steadily
growing interest in the use of diaries in qualitative health and social research. For example, Alaszewski (2006), used diaries to try and understand the ways in which district nurses managed risk. However, he describes the literature on diary use up until that point as ‘so patchy’ (Alaszewski 2006, p.5) that he embarked on researching diary use as a methodology itself.

The following section will look at diary keeping in more detail.

6.2.1.1 Structured Diaries

The use of structured diaries generally falls under the positivist perspective and involves the use of formats such as rating scales and closed questions. Examples of the use of structured diaries are the annual UK Family Expenditure Survey (Redpath 1991) which used diaries to collect data for the Retail Price Index, and the National Travel Survey (Gershuny 1986) where diaries were kept by commuters to observe travel trends. In both these examples diaries had a structure focused on measuring a specific outcome.

In certain dairy studies, the structure involves a participant coding their own responses. An example of a self coding study is Burt (1994) where participants were asked to score their daily responses to stress and anxiety numerically from the seven codes provided.

Structured diaries can be used as for therapeutic purposes as well as a research tool. An example is where individuals collate self reported accounts on factors such as their substance misuse or food consumption. In these cases patterns can be observed and acted upon. An example of this type of research can be seen in the work of Hollis, et al (2008) where they found dieters who kept a food diary almost doubled the amount of weight they lost when compared with dieters who did not keep a food diary. Diaries with a psychological therapeutic context do raise some ethical considerations of diary keeping which is discussed later in this chapter.

The primary critique of structured diary use is that entries, such as those in the food diary research, can be unreliable (Stewart 1967). However, Symon (1998)
argues that any critique of structured diaries as unreliable is relevant to criticism of positivism in general. It is the epistemological stance of the research/er and not the diary as a research tool that is in question. This client study does not epistemologically or ontologically sit within the positivist paradigm in which structured diary keeping is relevant.

A discursive study such as this is more amenable to the use of free text diaries where the main advantage is in the greater opportunity they offer a client to use their own language over a period of time. In this way the discourses a client used over the period of their GHEI interactions can be interrogated to identify any changes in the diary keeping period. By investigating the discourses clients use at the start of their sessions and then following the sessions through with each diary entry, an analysis can be made not only of their overall discourses and how they relate to practitioner discourses; they can capture client discourses over time.

6.2.1.2 Free Text Dairies

A free text diary is one where an individual expresses personal views and experiences in an individual way, without any structure to impede their documentation. An example is the log kept by a researcher to detail and reflect on research experiences. The general aim of free text diaries is to capture thoughts, feelings and emotions (Clarke and Iphofen 2006). Or, to re-frame this concept in relation to a constructionist/discursive perspective, the aim is to capture how discourses construct an account of thoughts, feelings and emotions.

One reason for the previously cited qualitative neglect of diaries in health may be due to public familiarity with diaries in art and literature, rather than a research tool. Examples of famous published diaries abound and include Anne Frank (Frank 2001), Samuel Pepys (Pepys 2003), and even Buster the Dog (Hattersley 1998). Blogs are becoming increasingly popular as ordinary individuals place their diaries on line for a general audience. This familiarity can be one of the strengths of free text diaries as a research tool, as diary keeping is generally well known and understood.
Free text diaries provide a rich source of data on a real time basis. If a diary entry is made soon after an event, the contemporaneous account can inform as to language used at that point in time. If a participant is asked to recall an event some time after it has happened, as may be the case in an interview, the response may not be so insightful for the researcher interested in discourses and how they metamorphose. As Clayton and Thorne (2000) point out, the advantage of diaries is in the reduction of distortion that can occur when recalling events in retrospect. This includes ‘distortion’ in language use.

One of the limitations of the interview tool in the practitioner study was that it only collated the language practitioners were using at one point in time. Taking discourses as language systems that shape practice and which change over time, the interview method gave no insight into how practitioner discourses might metamorphose. As Elliot (1997) notes, proximity to a participant’s frame of reference can be developed through the use of diaries. In this client study, use of diaries would achieve closeness to client frames of reference through an analysis of their discourses over a period of time.

Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner and Reynolds (1996) distinguished three types of free text diaries:

- Interval contingent – complete diary at the end of the day
- Event contingent – note experiences after a pre-specified event
- Signal contingent – prompted to complete the diary by an alarm (logging)

To illustrate this, by asking clients to complete their diary after each horse session, the diary keeping process would be event contingent. Parkinson et al (1996) argued that event contingent studies are less suitable for studying unfolding processes because they are focused on an event rather than a process. However, the intention of the diary keeping was to obtain insight into how clients discursively construct an experience such as a horse session. Therefore, this argument is not relevant to this study if it is considered that the language clients may use in their diary is in itself part of a constitutive process.
The delineation Parkinson et al (1996) offer between the three approaches is not a rigid classification. For example, it is possible to combine event and signal contingency (logging) with participants to remind them to complete their diaries so avoiding retrospective entries. Further discussion will take place on retrospection and logging later in this chapter.

Whatever contingent study is adopted, good practice suggests that participants must be provided with a cut off point for completing their diaries (Elliot 1997, Hyland 1996, Symon 1998).

6.2.1.3 Limitations to Free Text Diaries

One reported limitation of diary keeping in general is compliance. Bowling (1997) suggests respondents may fail to complete, or even complete their diary retrospectively. Corti (1998) found that appealing to a participant’s altruism at the outset of a study helped with compliance. In this study participants were informed they may not experience any direct benefit themselves from taking part in the research but they would help develop an understanding of GHEI in the longer term. This involved a direct appeal to their altruism and whilst this may help with compliance, non completion of diaries as requested, such as completing an entry long after the event is a consideration.

It is completing diaries retrospectively that Bowling (1997) briefly mentions that is an important consideration for this client study. Any change in the discourses the clients may use over time was one of the main strengths in using free text diaries as a research tool. Hyland (1996) suggests that either non completion on some days or completing retrospectively should either be accounted for in the study design or to use a logging technique. For example, one logging technique is texting the participant after a known session to remind them to complete their diary. Another technique is suggested by Hyland (1996) who recommends the use of electronic diaries that do not permit retrospection. Electronic diaries also have an advantage of not having to transcribe hand written text or audio recordings. However, there can be issues around access to computers and data protection. Ethical considerations around secure servers include the need to protect anonymity.
At the other end of a hypothetical continuum to non-compliance is the level of disclosure that can be exacted through free text diaries. In the study involving diaries by Elliot (1997) the participants completed their free text diary in different ways, with some being more intimate with their recordings than others. Although Elliot (1997) does not state that intimacy could be problematic, this client study looked at what could be classified as therapeutic interactions. Therefore, there was a risk that a diary could be completed but later withdrawn because of the nature of personal content.

One key limitation on the use of free text diaries is the level of literacy that is required to complete. This can be ruled out by including audio recorded diaries in the research design. Literacy also includes the ability to write in handwriting that can be easily read, although illegible handwriting has not been recorded as problematic in any diary study reviewed to date. Notwithstanding, in these circumstances alternative methods, such as audio recording, could be a consideration.

There is also an implication in diary keeping that participation involves a level of articulation. A participant where spoken or written language is challenging could utilise signs and symbols such as Makaton, or complete their diary graphically through pictures or visual recording equipment. Research involving a structured multi modal approach to language use would make a valuable contribution to the body of discourse analysis.

### 6.2.2 Alternative Methods

An original consideration in the client study was to undertake interviews with clients following their involvement with GHEI. Ethical approval was received for this in 2006. However, one of limitations highlighted in the practitioner study, was the concern that one off interviews did not facilitate understanding of language change over time.

Observation over periods of time was also a consideration for the client study. However, aside from the challenges of recording in a large arena or field with a
herd of horses, there were also the ethical implications of recording therapeutic style sessions for research purposes.

One further consideration was the use of longitudinal interviews. One of the key issues for use of this particular method was in capturing clients over periods of time and at points when they were potentially undergoing a therapeutic programme. Although this does not totally negate this particular approach, practitioners, as the gatekeepers to accessing clients reported their concerns at the additional pressure they believed two separate interviews might place on their clients. Practitioners were protective of access to clients for research purposes. They felt clients came to GHEI often because of social or emotional issues in their personal lives, where adding a further dimension of two interviews with a researcher might impact on the therapeutic process.

The advantage to free text diaries over interviews and observation in discursive approaches is they allow access to everyday language and discourses in a relatively unobtrusive way. Researcher contact with the participant is minimal compared to interviews, rendering the interaction between researcher and participant as less intense. This in turn holds the potential for the impact of the researcher to be less than in face to face interviews. With free text diaries clients are able to structure their accounts in a way that is acceptable to them. In this way diaries are able to capture participants own priorities.

Despite the strength of a free text diary method over the interview and observation methods in terms of researcher influence, there is a need to acknowledge the researcher does still influence the recording in a diary entry. The findings of a diary study into lay concepts of mental health by Pavis, Masters, and Cunningham-Burley (1996) identified there was a strong awareness of the researcher in the entries, where often the diaries were written with the researcher as the reader in mind. Notwithstanding, the researcher would be less likely to influence the language used in free text diaries than methods where the physical presence of the researcher may have more impact.
6.2.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for a study interviewing clients who had experience of GHEI was originally granted in 2006 (Ethics Number PO6-07-02) at the same time as ethical approval was granted for the practitioner study (Appendix 2). The practitioner study was completed and as a result of the findings, it was proposed that a change was made to the research tool for the client study. This involved a change from the semi structured interviews for which ethical approval was initially granted, to self completion diaries (Appendix 8). The rationale for this change has been discussed in the previous section of this chapter. However, a change from interviews to free text diaries also brought with it a different set of ethical considerations. These considerations will be explored in turn.

It is acknowledged that self-completion diaries are dependent on the participant having a level of literacy to enable completion. Thus, participants were to be offered the opportunity to audio record their diaries as opposed to writing them. Technical advice on audio recording was sought from the appropriate personnel within the University.

Participants were informed at the outset that guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity would be honoured unless there were clear reasons for over-riding this, such as child or vulnerable adult protection. They were advised they could leave the study at any time with no detrimental effect to their involvement in GHEI. They did not have to complete their diary following any particular session, and they could withdraw their diary at point.

They were also informed that audio tapes and written diaries would be kept by the researcher in a secure environment and only used with the researcher/supervisors present. They will be kept for 15 years according to University of Southampton protocol following the conclusion of the research and then destroyed. Audio clips will not be used for dissemination. Birthdates and identifiers such as postcodes were not collected.
Audio recorded diaries were to be transcribed and stored securely in a passworded computer database. Written diaries were to be similarly transferred into a word format where required and stored securely in a passworded computer database. Transcribed data will be kept for 15 years in accordance with University regulations. Participants were assured their anonymity will be preserved in the final thesis. Any identifying data will not be published or used for dissemination at conferences, in reports, publications or writing of this thesis.

One ethical consideration relevant to the use of diaries is that of debriefing participants once they had completed their diary. Elliot (1997) details how a diary is generally a private document written for the diarist whereas the diary in this case would be written as a research document. Therefore, debriefing was considered an important part of the research process. Participants would have vested time and interest into completing the journals and as such merited some response and valuing of their input. In addition, the debriefing would provide additional and important information about diary keeping as a research tool.

The debriefing in this study was based on a format developed by Symon (1998) in her study into the use of individual workstations in a public service organisation. The original format by Symon (1998) only related to activities and events but it does provide a useful starting point for structuring a diary debriefing session. The debriefing format for this client study included perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the diary keeping process (table 23).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 23: Diary Debriefing Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How the participant selected what activities to record and what was omitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ease, or otherwise, with which they were able to record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree to which they felt keeping a diary changed their activities, perceptions, thoughts, or feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often they recorded sessions i.e. whether they often did not record things they themselves regarded as important and if they recorded them retrospectively at any point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree to which they found the diaries personally useful – what they felt about keeping them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Based on Symon 1998)
In Symon’s (1998) study, one third of the participants reported the process of keeping the diary made them more reflective. By facilitating reflection, this raised the question of the therapeutic context of diary keeping and how this should be addressed and managed. It was intended that the diary debriefing format would assist with this process and participants could be directed towards further support if this was required.

### 6.2.3.1 Access to Participants

Recruitment of participants took place initially though one centre in the UK practising GHEI as part of the overall client treatment plan. This was a not for profit centre where the majority of clients attended because their addictive behaviours such as alcohol, sex, drugs and food addictions were causing them some distress. The centre changed status early on in the recruitment process to become a registered charity and began accepting a wider range of clientele, including children and young people. The move impacted on the number of adult clients that could be recruited to the research. Therefore, following a request for further ethical approval, two additional centres were added to the recruitment process (Appendix 8). One centre worked primarily with adults, whilst the other centre involved one practitioner who worked with individuals on a private therapeutic style or learning basis.

Centre personnel were briefed and provided with written details, so they could talk with clients about the research (Appendix 9). Respondents were asked to contact the researcher direct by telephone or email for an initial discussion if they were interested in participating in the study. This was to determine if they met the criteria for inclusion, to inform them further of the study rationale, to explain the diary keeping procedures, and to obtain their verbal informed consent.

Potential participants were then forwarded an information sheet and consent form (Appendix 9) and advised that contact would be made again in two to four days by email or telephone, at the end of the consideration period. If in agreement to participate in the study, they were asked to return the signed consent form. A diary pack with a written instruction sheet was then provided
The diary keeping instructions were reviewed with the respondent, and points of future contact agreed.

6.2.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study are detailed in table 24.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 24: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Client Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged over 18 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide consent to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can not communicate in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in simultaneous research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inclusion criteria involved clients who were going to experience at least one session of GHEI and up to the maximum number of six sessions. Limiting the sessions to six was based on the potential for excessive data production. The only exclusion criteria referred to clients who could not communicate in English, or who were under the age of 18 years.

6.2.5 Research Governance and Professional Indemnity

This study followed the research governance principles detailed in section 4.2. Professional Indemnity was provided by the University of Southampton (Appendix 4).
6.2.5.1 Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment for the study was undertaken and submitted as part of the ethical consent procedure outlined in sections 4.2.2 and 6.2.3 (Appendix 2).

6.2.6 Recruitment of Participants

One of the challenges for diary research is in not knowing how much data will be recorded by any given participant. As pointed out in the methodology chapter (section 3.9), the interest for this research was in language use and not specifically the people using it (Elliot 1996). Therefore, there was no need to focus on a specific number of individuals to recruit, but to ensure adequate data were available for an analysis of discourses to take place.

Due to the limitations in a discursive study that producing too much data can harbour, the client study focused on recruiting three participants. However, ethical approval was granted to recruit up to ten should the amount of data generated require this.

6.2.7 Free Text Diary Pilot

Recruitment into the study began in February 2009 following changes to the original ethical approval from interviews to free text diaries.

It was intended to pilot self completion diaries with two participants in order to stage a testing of the process, assess the verbal and written guidance and ensure the end result fitted the purpose of the research. Pilot participants were to be asked to comment on their perceptions, feelings and thoughts on the self completion diary process, including instructions and contact with the researcher. However, recruitment was slow due to changes at the initial centre which limited the overall number of clients available. Therefore, two practitioners volunteered to complete the diaries in relation to testing the
process. One practitioner completed a diary over a four week period. The other practitioner did not complete due to family issues. It was felt that as advocates for clients, practitioners would have some understanding of the diary process and would be critical in their feedback. In addition, the practitioner who participated had been a client of mental health services and of GHEI, thereby adding the value of her unique insight into the process.

Following submission of this pilot diary, the practitioner highlighted that the amount of paperwork involved in relation to information about the study, consent form and diary instruction sheets, could be off putting for some clients who might feel overwhelmed. There is a fine line to be drawn between providing information about the research and appearing remote and over bureaucratic. Notwithstanding, it was determined that no changes were required to the process or the format in the interests of sound ethical and informed research.

Planning for the pilot did illuminate the challenges that were to be faced in reaching clients prior to their first session. Therefore, the expectation of contacting clients before their sessions started was dropped from the recruitment process. Many clients either self refer for GHEI or, if they are referred, attend a centre for the first time on the day they have their first session. This process negated the time to recruit clients to a research study before they commence their sessions.

The pilot also illuminated the amount of data that would be submitted. In terms of undertaking discursive interrogation of the text for the client study, one of the critiques of discourse analysis is that large amounts of data can result in wider descriptive, rather than detailed interrogative analysis (Antaki et al 2002). By limiting the number of diaries used for the client study it would be possible to look more in depth at prominent discourses. No data from the pilot was included in the final analysis.
6.2.8 The Free Text Diary Process

Data collection took place from February 2009, commencing with the pilot, however no pilot data is included in this study. The first participant outside of the pilot was recruited in April 2009. This time span allowed for an appropriate period of recruitment, diary keeping, debriefing, and feedback.

The diary keeping process involved an open format which facilitated the recording of GHEI experiences in the participants own words or pictures. An A4 journal was provided. Clients were also given an option of using audio recording equipment.

The design of the diary schedule was based on literature citing good practice and diary research designs that included lessons learned. The value of authors detailing their learning curves in using this particular method can not be understated in ensuring that pitfalls were avoided in this study. For example, once they had completed their consent forms, the participant was provided with a clear set of written instructions on how to complete the diary (Appendix 9). The instructions stressed the importance of recording their sessions as soon as possible after they occurred, a definition of a session, and prompts to help them complete their diaries if they found it hard to think of what to record.

Consideration had to be given to how prompts might influence participant’s recordings and this had to be weighed against not providing any direction. The decision to provide some guidance was based on a rationale that the prompts mirrored the topic schedule for the practitioner study, for example, their first experience of a horse. In this way the prompts could aid investigation of client discursive constructions in relation to practitioner constructions.

Evidence from diary research suggests ‘first day effects’ (where the diary is kept in more detail on the first day than on subsequent days) can occur. This may be due to participants changing their behaviour as a result of keeping the
diary or becoming more complacent. This was also evidenced by the practitioner who had piloted the diary process. The pilot diary keeper also advocated alerting the participant during the diary keeping period to help preserve diary keeping. No information from this prompt was recorded as it was solely to remind the participant to complete their diary entry.

6.2.9 Data Analysis

Analysis of free text diaries does require some consideration as it is often cited as a major limitation of this instrument because of the enormous amount of data that can be collected (Bolger et al 2003). In the context of this Client Study, whilst it is acknowledged as a limitation in general, the strategy for analysis is the same as that applied in both the practitioner and website studies (section 3.8).

6.3 FINDINGS

Recruitment to the client study did prove to be challenging. One reason for this may lie in the effects of the recession at the time of recruitment as all three centres involved in the client study took private clients. They all reported having fewer clients. Three participants were recruited into the study. However, one participant left the centre part way through her planned sessions. She dropped out of the study and was no longer contactable. Another participant reported she had kept a diary of her GHEI sessions recorded on her computer. She advised when she moved house the data was no longer retrievable from the computer. The third participant submitted her diary. The decision was made to proceed with an analysis of this one diary.

Whilst the diary submission for this client study was limited to one client, it did provide an opportunity in discourse analysis terms to be able to interrogate, analyse and interpret one clients account in far more detail and depth than had been possible in the two previous studies.
This client submitted her diary following the conclusion of her six sessions of GHEI. The submitted diary consisted of two entries, one entry made following the client’s second session of GHEI and a subsequent diary recording made three weeks following completion of all the planned sessions. The client did not directly record details of her first session of GHEI but verbally reported she was unable to enter the arena with the horses during that session because of her fear of them.

Specific details of the client are not included to protect her anonymity. In addition, by stating that she had problems with addiction, bi-polar disorder, or whatever labels might be assigned to an individual, this research would have placed her in a subject position solely dependent on her diagnostic and social labels rather than centring her in the research as an individual. Therefore personal information about the client is not included.

The diary entries are replicated in full in table 25 on the following page. The sections following table 25 are structured according to the interrogative questions previously used in both the practitioner and website studies in this thesis (detailed in section 3.8). Throughout the findings section, direct quotes from the client diary are in italics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diary Entry One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The horses are besides themselves  
They haven't had their tea  
So they gather round the gate  
Oh no! Their tea is me |
| Just take deep breaths and count to ten  
And visualise a bubble  
Lift the latch and in I go  
Oh no! I’m so in trouble |
| The sniff, they lick, they snort and prance  
And swish a hairy tail  
I can not breathe, I can not move  
Oh no! I quietly wail |
| Give me the strength to face my fears  
Without the smell of sweat  
Let me do this just one time  
Oh yes! I can, you bet |
| Don't push me and don't you shove  
And you there move your arse  
Give me my space to be myself  
Oh yes! A gap at last |
| Now you back off and you behave  
And you there stop your sulk  
And me, I found some strength at last  
Oh yes! Reveal the Hulk |
| I've found the person deep inside  
The one with green uncurled  
Who tears their clothes and rants and raves  
Oh yes! Now look out world'.
Diary Entry Two

‘Insight insight insight
Has helped me change my ways
A deep and soulful shift in gear
To steer me through my days

Insight insight insight
Into who I am and why
I do the things I do because
My inner world denied

Insight insight insight
I now understand the gains
About the ride and at what pace
And that I control the reins

I control the start and whoa
And where I stop and how
And when I go and at what speed
I control the now!’

6.3.1 What is the dominant discourse?

As can be noted from table 25 the client elected to compose poems to detail her experience. As such, the poems themselves provide a first point of analysis in terms of their structure, prior to consideration of their content.

Easthorpe (2002) defines poetry as a type of discourse that expresses experience and it is clear the client aimed to reflect a sense of what she experienced. The use of poetry in this case succinctly provides the reader with an insight into the participant’s emotional and behavioural experiences with the horses. The prosodic patterns of intonation and rhythm of the poems provides a musical quality as she tells a story of her experience and the effects this had on her. In this way she is able to ‘sing’ of overcoming a previously overwhelming powerful emotion of fear and use symbolic metaphor to evoke
strong visual images of transformation. This combination of emotion and symbolic images are explored and developed throughout this chapter.

The diary was submitted by email in an electronic format as appears in table 25. The poems appear different on the page from more generalised script as they have been centred. So, they not only have a musical pattern but a visual pattern as well. This is a visual pattern elicited from the choice of font and positioning of text on the page, as well as a visual image surfaced from the use of the text itself. This patterning can provide some meaning. In addition, euphony, or an inherent pleasantness in the sounds of certain words and sentences, is apparent through the regular beat and rhyming cadence. The pace of both poems brings to mind the sensation of riding a horse at extended walk.

In addition to the musical and visual patterns there are the discourses enmeshed within the content of the poems. These discourses show a dominant symbolic discourse with a secondary sensory discourse. The relationship of these two discourses to the mental distress, social, and metaphysical discourses accounted for by both the practitioner and website studies are drawn on throughout the analysis.

Table 26 details the rationale for the isolation of these two particular dominant discourses along with examples from the given text.
Table 26: Dominant Client Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Use of metaphor, analogy and simile through a process of isomorphism. Symbols equate to words, objects and mental images (Tompkins and Lawley 2001). Symbols surface different subject positioning.</td>
<td><strong>Fearful female</strong> ‘Oh no! Their tea is me’&lt;br&gt;<strong>Angry male</strong>: ‘reveal the Hulk’ as the person ‘deep inside’.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Person in control</strong>: I control the start and whoa&lt;br&gt;<strong>Emotion</strong>: ‘give me the strength to face my fears’&lt;br&gt;<strong>Smell</strong>: ‘without the smell of sweat’&lt;br&gt;<strong>Touching</strong>: ‘don’t push me’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Touching, smelling, emotion movement, position and balance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two discourses are explored in more detail in the following section.

6.3.1.1 Symbolic Discourse

The predominant discourse in the diary is symbolic. For Lawley and Tompkins (2000) symbolic means not only relating to a symbol such as the Hulk or riding a horse evident in the two poems, it also involves the individual connecting with a pattern that has personal significance for them through a process called isomorphism. Isomorphism is a term used in algebra to denote mapping relationships between two objects. Through their extensive work with symbols Lawley and Tompkins (2000) argue that from birth we create models of how reality functions, which result, in our own personal symbolic model of self, or our own construct of self identity. In constructionist terms this ‘identity’ is a result of taking up subject positions, such as female, and then accepting or rejecting the finite number of cultural discourses that are available to that position. In this way the person is constructed by the discourses but is also able to manipulate them. This level of personal control is referred to as human agency. It is through recognising the limitations that subject positioning brings and how they shape our identity that we are able to move to a position in discourse that may be less damaging to an individual or a group.
Figure 5 illustrates the process outlined in relation to the client where the poems surfaced a move across three subject positionings.

**Figure 5: Client Self Identity**

This approach to identity is based on the notion of a discursive world in which positions are taken up, constructed, and resisted. The poems show the first position taken up by the client is that of facing a fear to interact with the horses. She initially presents as a woman afraid of the horses and of entering the arena with them. The subject positioning here is **fearful female**.
An emphasis is then placed by the client on a symbolic transformation through releasing an inner self. To illustrate this she invokes the analogy of the Hulk to explain the change that occurred for her. The subject positioning here is **angry male**.

Finally, the poems centre on her riding a metaphorical horse to illustrate continued transformation. The subject positioning here is **person in control**.

Identity results from relational networks where taking a subject position outside of socially acceptable discourses can create tension and confusion (Burr 1995). Ideologies of femininity constitute female sense of identity which, according to Law (1999), enlists both males and females in perpetuating regulatory gender discourses. The first subject positioning of fearful female is in keeping with historical Christian ideology on females as emotional beings that require protection (Burr 2008). Yet, for the client, this particular subject positioning was creating tension.

She then moves to a different subject position through her interaction with the horses that invokes a masculine identity of the Hulk. This constitutes a position other than the culturally acceptable feminine fear. The Hulk is a fictional character that first appeared in Marvel Comics in 1962. It is depicted as the alter ego of a mild and reserved scientist who involuntary transforms into the Hulk when he becomes angry or is in pain. The Hulk is represented as a giant, raging, green creature capable of extreme strength (Marvel Universe 2009). For the client, the Hulk was her isomorphic metaphor for her first move to a less damaging subject position than fearful female.

Sontag (1978) in her seminal exploration of illness as metaphor noted that all successful metaphors provide for two contradictory meanings or binary oppositions. Certainly the concept of the Hulk could be contradictory for the client whereby a symbolic angry, green, masculine creature is not a socially acceptable subject position for a female constructed by culturally acceptable feminine discourses. However, the nature of the Hulk in the original scripts involved pain or anger facilitating change from a mild mannered scientist to a creature that was physically strong and fearless. So it appears in all likelihood this creature was symbolic of a positive move to a different subject positioning for the client, who found she was unable to enter the arena with the horses on
her first session because of fear. Metaphorically taking up a different subject position through the concept of the Hulk to draw on angry masculine discourse helped her face that fear.

It could be questioned as to why the female author of these poems turned to a male fictional figure for this subject positioning. Aside from Searle (2004, p.37) arguing that all expressions of self are ‘fictitious’, drawing on a male persona to account for the strength required to move the horses may be related to the absence of strong female discourses that are not subject to derisory regulation. Minkowitz (1996) notes that no female fictional characters portrayed on television have exhibited the strength and confidence of the male archetypes and heroes. By drawing on a masculine persona the client is able to accept or reject a different range of discourses to account for the change in her subject positioning.

In the final subject positioning in the poems, the client becomes person in control. Again this position is surfaced through her symbolic account of riding a horse to demonstrate control. Drewery and Mckenzie (1999) state that personal control is central to many forms of therapy. Within this concept it is believed that because an individual has lost agency over their own life, a therapeutic intervention is required for them to regain control. The notion of control, especially in therapy, is often presented as unproblematic. However, in some circumstances, a client wanting control can be problematic, especially when a didactic practitioner engages with a client who will not adopt a ‘patient’ role. This was highlighted in the practitioner study (section 4.4.6), when it was stated that clients with expert knowledge of horses were not suitable for GHEI. Therefore the notion of control in relation to both therapy and education does not take into account the discursive limitations imposed on human capacity to act in the world. For this client, symbolic control of a horse involved a search for meaning through the adoption of a subject positioning she was possibly more comfortable with than fearful female.
6.3.1.2 Sensory Discourse

Interpreting the sensory discourse employed by the client is sub divided into three approaches. The first approach is to surface aspects of the sensory discourse. The second approach is to analyse the discourses drawn on by the client, for example by questioning the social processes relating to fear of horses. The third approach is to explore the discursive resources she draws on in relation to managing the sensory discourses.

The range of sensory discourse detailed by the client covered the majority of senses with the exception of the gustatory mode (table 27).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Touch</th>
<th>Kinaesthetic</th>
<th>Auditory</th>
<th>Olfactory</th>
<th>Emotion/feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visualise a</td>
<td>Push</td>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Snort</td>
<td>Sniff</td>
<td>Can not breathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bubble</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prance</td>
<td>Shove</td>
<td>Rant</td>
<td>Smell of</td>
<td>Strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swish a</td>
<td>Back off</td>
<td>Rave</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hairy tail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lick</td>
<td>Move your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>arse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sensory experience provides us with direct and immediate feedback that relates to our earliest experiences. Kopp (1995), for example, believes our sensory associations are formulated in infancy and from these we construct all our subsequent sensory concepts. Later in life our sensory associations are transferred to verbal expressions or discourses. What we take to be natural, such as our expression of emotion or touch, is part of the normalisation of social processes. Thus, the accounts of sensory modes such as smell and hearing are enabled and constrained by what discourses are socially and culturally acceptable. For example, unacceptable touch would be a therapist touching a client whilst acceptable touch would be human/animal touch,
especially in the process of carrying out some action such as pushing a horse away.

It can be seen from table 27 that in terms of primacy of the sensory discourses, emotional arousal formed the main account. This account relates essentially to fear, which is a topic developed further later in this chapter (What is the important thing present in this world?), but in this section is related to the discursive resources the client employs. This discursive resource involving fear of horses does not reflect the love and passion for equines described by the practitioners. In tracing the origins of the binary opposition of fear and love relating to horses it is worth returning to the myth of the half human half horse Centaurs (section 1.3) In this myth, the Centaurs had the ability to invoke fear through their fighting, drinking and murderous behaviour whilst one Centaur, Chiron, taught medicine and had the ability to heal (Mendia Landa 2005). The binary opposites apparent in this myth about the horse/human relationship to do with fear and healing appear to have been remoulded for contemporary use in GHEI.

The sensory discourse is also centred on the kinaesthetic mode, which in this case is defined as an awareness of where the client physically positions herself in relation to the horses. This relates to an awareness of body space and the ability to establish relationship boundaries with the horses at a time when the horses were pushing and shoving her.

Horses establish boundaries and thus power and social control through the occupation of space, whilst humans do this through the privileging of certain discourses. Morris (2000) illustrates three characteristic equine body signals which can be seen in the client’s first poem. This includes:

- The body check (now you back off) is where a dominant horse will move its body across another’s path to prevent it from advancing. If a horse, or human, retreats at this point then the body checker is dominant.

- The shoulder barge (don’t you shove) is a more extreme version of the body check where the horse makes contact.
• The rump presentation (move your arse) is a defensive display and is a warning of a possible kick, but most times it is not a serious threat.

The horses appear to have been displaying these normal equine behaviours where their body signals may not necessarily have been directed at the client but between herd members as they gather round the gate. However the client would have become involved in their interactions as she entered their space.

Whilst this sensory discourse illustrates the relevance of utilising horses to facilitate understanding of the importance of establishing and maintaining relational boundaries and acceptable behaviour, it also highlights similarities between human and equine discursive resources. Turning your back on an individual trying to communicate with you is the same discursive resource as a horse presenting its rump. Saying in a confident voice now you back off would on most occasions have the desired effect with another human, whilst a horse placing itself across the path of another horse would be a similar discursive resource. This illustrates how horses use the discursive resources available to them such as a sensory discourse involving space, touch and smell to socially interact and communicate power and dominance through their species unique use of language.

6.3.2 How is this discourse maintained?

The client discourses consist of symbolic and sensory accounts in relation to her experience of GHEI. Discourses are maintained by the roles, or subject positioning, the key participants adopt or are given in any particular discourse. The key roles accounted for by the client are included in table 28.
Table 28: Client Study – Summary of Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of the client in the symbolic discourse</th>
<th>To illustrate insight leading to change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of the client in the sensory discourse</td>
<td>To illustrate change through range of senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the horse in the symbolic discourse</td>
<td>To act as a metaphor/symbol for the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the horse in the sensory discourse</td>
<td>To act as a horse and facilitate a range of sensory modes for the client including emotional arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the practitioner in the symbolic discourse</td>
<td>To facilitate embodied knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the practitioner in the sensory discourse</td>
<td>To act as a catalyst for the human/horse interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.2.1 Role of the Client

The role of the client accounted for in these two poems is one that demonstrates insight leading to change, or a shift in subject positioning. This shift is demonstrated through the use of symbol and metaphor in the symbolic discourse and the account in the sensory discourse as she shifted from fear to control. As previously discussed, change in subject positioning is bought about by discomfort in occupying a subject position, such as fearful female, which can lead to the adoption of a different and competing discourse. However, by becoming person in control the client is taking on more than the effort to change the nature of interactions in her relational networks. She is taking on the dissolving of a prevailing discourse of fearful female which is personally, socially, and historically embedded. This could have the effect of her having to discursively challenge associated social processes. In contrast, in
terms of her role of client in attending for therapy, by demonstrating this insight and change, she is adopting a socially acceptable therapeutic outcome. There is a paradox between the socially unacceptable and acceptable functions of gender versus therapeutic discursive resources. The result situates her within a desired therapeutic discourse involving change, whilst simultaneously positioning her within a contesting discourse relating to gender identity through the discursive resources available to the symbolic angry male.

This client role of demonstrating insight leading to change is reflected in all three of the primary discourses accounted for in the practitioner study. In that study the client role involved:

- Social discourse - the client role was to develop insight into personal behaviour
- Mental distress discourse - the client role was to change behaviour
- Metaphysical discourse - the client role was to utilise the horse as a metaphor for change.

Hoffman (2006) questions why we privilege discourses on change. Perhaps it is to do with the notion that language is not a passive reflection of the external world. We only have a finite number of discourses available to us to construct a social reality (Gergen 2009), but the meaning given to that reality through language is fluid. Any challenge to a perceived reality may reveal it as incomplete and so prompt the drawing on of different discourses that construct different meaning.

6.3.2.2 Role of the Horse

The role of the horse for this client is symbolic in helping her attain a more comfortable subject positioning, whilst providing for a range of sensory experience. This equates on one level with the role of the horse in the account given by practitioners who utilised the mental distress discourse. In that account the horse role was to induce nervousness and fear (section 4.4.2.2.
table 15), which equates to the sensory experience the client accounted for. The horse role in the practitioner metaphysical discourse was to provide a large, living, breathing sensory metaphor which equates with the client symbolic discourse. However, it appears practitioners held a more idealised view of the role of the horses in general. Their account of the horse role as providing unconditional love, connection, and a spiritual source, does not materialise for this particular client.

This client-equine interaction is not at an individualised or personalised level as the participant does not ascribe any characteristics to the horses. It is not even known how many horses were involved, what colour, type, or any physical attributes, let alone personality traits. The meaning she gives to the horse role is for them to provide her with the ability to overcome her fears and be symbolic of her demonstration of change and control.

6.3.2.3 Role of the Practitioner

The role of the practitioner in this client account is firstly one of absence. There is no notion in the poems of the practitioner. In the poems the focus is on the client’s way of understanding the world where she has elected to structure this experience without reference to the practitioner. Whilst it is known from the context of the situation a practitioner must have had some presence at some point, the client has not illustrated this directly.

Within this scenario the dynamics of the practitioner/client relationship are not clear other than the practitioner taking a non directive role in the actual human/horse interaction described. This appears to show a shift in dynamics between practitioner and client from authoritative knowledge having primacy to the valuing of embodied knowledge thereby implying empowerment. There is much discussion in the literature about ‘empowerment’ of clients where arguments and counter arguments abound (Jacob 1996). As practitioners in many fields of social care and mental health strive for client empowerment, institutional discourses objectify the client as a ‘case’ and the practitioner as the ‘expert’ where privileged assumptions underpin practice. Even the term empowerment constructs power as belonging to the practitioner where it is
taken to imply the giving of power by the powerful to the powerless. However if the power base is not given, but assembled by drawing on different discourses, then clients can figure power into their own accounts. Much the same as this client has done – by positioning herself as client at the centre, writing out authoritative knowledge, and assembling an account where embodied knowledge is privileged.

By excluding the practitioner from her account, the emphasis appears to be on her relationship with the horses. However, as Foucault (1995) postulates, destabilising one system, such as the practitioner/client power dynamic, does not necessarily mean that something better will take its place. Instead of simply remoulding this dyadic relationship, it is worth considering how the horse impacts on those dynamics. Whilst the role of the horse has been explored here in relation to the client account where it is positioned as a ‘tool’ for change, practitioners gave the horse a more parallel role to their own. Certain practitioners viewed the horse as a co-therapist, thereby blurring the distinction between the equine and practitioner roles. So, whilst the client erased one practitioner, there is still a group of them present in her account.

Although the client did not account for horses as therapists in her diary entries, to the practitioner involved with the client, the horses were possibly acting in this role. These co-therapists would provide the practitioner with permission to abdicate the expert role and adopt a different subject position such as interested observer. The meaning given to the co-therapists by the practitioner would be the horses are equally placed to support the client in facing her fears to become person in control. In this case then, the role of the human practitioner becomes one of a catalyst for change through setting up a scenario for co-therapist/client power dynamics to take place and where the client is seen to ‘win’ through her own volition in that relationship.

6.3.3 Are there contesting discourses?

The weaving of the symbolic and sensory discourses by this client combines to produce an overall picture of one person’s account of GHEI. However, conflict does appear to arise between the sensory discourse and the fictional account
created through the use of metaphors. On one level there is a strong account of a physical experience as opposed to symbolic. Lawley and Tompkins (2000) wrote about domains of experience and contend that symbolic and sensory are not necessarily at odds with each other. Thus, describing taking *deep breaths*, *sniffing* and *licking* as physical senses alongside symbolic aspects, such as *shifting gear*, are interrelated ways of constructing the world.

Although tension in the discourses can be accounted for through the binary oppositions of the sensory fearful female, and the symbolic angry male, a constructionist approach would not privilege one arm of the opposition over another. In this case, to privilege the male over the female position would be to privilege the symbolic over the sensory.

6.3.4 How does the version of reality the discourses maintain mesh with discourses in other contexts

Table 29 on the following page relates the version of reality constructed in the diary to the version of reality constructed in the practitioner study.
As can be seen from table 29, the use of technical language or key words identified in the practitioner study as classifying a dominant discourse were not found to be dominant discourses in the client use of language. However the three dominant practitioner discourses were present, but at a different level in the client account.

There was no evidence in the poems of the technical language involved in the practitioner mental distress discourse. However the client did provide for an embodied rather than institutional eaning to mental distress. This involved her account of fear. In a similar way her account did not reflect the dominance given to the social discourse provided by the practitioners in relation to community and the family. This reflected an aspect of the social through her interaction with the horses, which involved putting in relational boundaries. Finally, the client account did not parallel the love, connection and spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner Discourse</th>
<th>Client Discourse Similarities</th>
<th>Client Discourse Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Distress</td>
<td>Mental distress identified as fear</td>
<td>No mental distress discourse evident in use of technical language (medical terminology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social discourse apparent in the social process of putting in boundaries with the horses to create a personal space</td>
<td>No social discourse evident in the use of technical language (community, culture, family and friendships)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
<td>Metaphysical discourse evident in use of the Hulk as a metaphor for showing strength in facing her fears or the horse as a demonstration of control</td>
<td>No metaphysical discourse as evidenced in the use of technical language (love, connection, spirituality, intuitive, organic or innate.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the practitioner account, but there was a metaphysical element through her use of symbol and metaphor.

There may also be a further interpretation in the client account of the metaphysical discourse. This relates to Buddhism. There is an implication in the texts that how the client moves, rides, or controls a horse, is a metaphor for how she behaves in her life in general. This concept of ‘how you do anything is how you do everything’ is a fundamental component of Buddhism (Huber 1988). Interestingly, according to Gergen (2009), Buddhist accounts play a significant role in constructionist debates as Buddhism advocates that language categorises our understanding of the world.

Thus, aspects of the practitioner discourses can be seen in the client account. However, they are given differing meanings and less primacy, as well as serving alternative functions.

The version of reality created by the client can also be related to the practitioner and website versions of reality (table 30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Discourse</th>
<th>Practitioner/website discourse</th>
<th>Practitioner/website discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Similarities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Differences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic</strong></td>
<td>Symbolic discourse identified through use of metaphor i.e horse is a mirror</td>
<td>Symbolic discourse in relation to weaving together different domains of personal experience is not a dominant discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensory</strong></td>
<td>Horses described as sensory objects for facilitating senses such as emotion (fear) and touch</td>
<td>Horses primarily sensory objects for clients to experience and not practitioners. Practitioners perceive horses to provide love, connection, and spiritual assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Client versus Practitioner Discourse
Similarly, discourses identified in the practitioner and website studies could be found in this client account, but, again, within a differing context and to a lesser extent than the practitioner primary discourses. The version of reality accounted for by the client is one subjective account, whereas the practitioners, including the practitioners involved in the websites, accounted for a reality in which institutional discourse is privileged over subjective experience. In both realities, the horses are accounted for as playing a key symbolic and metaphorical role.

6.3.5 What kind of world is conjured up?

The text records the interaction between client and horses. No-one else is present outside of this interaction. Client and horse are the only beings present in this world and although we know little of the horses, the client herself manifests with differing subject positions as the account progresses. Her thoughts, feelings, behaviours and coping strategies, as well as her emotions, are part of this subjective world.

The client is connected to the horses only in the sense of physical proximity in the first diary entry, whilst there is a symbolic connection in the second entry. It is a world where human emotions are expressed verbally and where equine intent is seen to be dubious, through pushing and shoving and possibly ‘consuming’ the client. From the content of the poems it is apparent she was afraid of the evolving experience as evidenced by the description of being the horses’ tea and having to take deep breaths before she could lift the latch.

Despite this fear, she entered an arena or field. To deal with her fear she used four well known coping strategies. Visualising a protective bubble, deep breathing, counting to ten, and self talk. Despite these strategies she remained concerned that her fear would culminate in the smell of sweat. In this world emotions can be faced and overcome by the use of structured strategies in order to bring about transformation.

The poem shows she believed in the act of finding her own space by putting in place some boundaries with the horses and ultimately not being pushed around by them. This act unlocked an inner strength. She uses the metaphor
of the Hulk to describe this strength. In relating her interaction with the horses to becoming the Hulk she acknowledges there was a different internal persona that was released. The last stanza shows this internal person as green *uncurled*. The Hulk, generally depicted as green, only reveals himself when he is angry, or in pain. She describes ripping of clothes and ranting and raving in keeping with the representation of the Hulk. Once this inner person is *uncurled*, it is questionable if she will revert to a fearful female as evidenced by the statement *now look out world*.

This transformation bought about an *insight*, which is repeated nine times and reiterated three times at the start of the first three stanzas. This insight appears to be an important element for the client, who continues by symbolically describing the consequence of insight as *a deep and soulful shift in gear to steer me through my days*.

In this world facing fears, transformation, insight, and ultimately control (*I control the start and whoa*) are all important elements. In this world, the horses are incidental on one level, but on the sensory and symbolic levels they are important. They are fundamental within the two discourses through the provision of a sensory modality for the client to experience at whatever level she requires. They also play a key part as a symbol for the client in controlling her journey into the future.

The world conjured by the texts is one where the knowledge base of the client is important. It is her story, her narrative, her account of her experiences which are created and informed by her embodied knowledge base. In the wider world outside of the account, it is questionable if the embodied knowledge of a client is considered by the majority to be of value, yet within these texts, embodied knowledge reigns. There is no technical language around mental health, only expressed emotion. There is no technical language around social, only interaction with horses. There is no technical language on the metaphysical, only a symbolic account. The client is at the centre of this world - in all her subject positions.
6.3.6 What kinds of people are present in the world? How about the people least likely to be associated with this world?

It is by looking at the combined reality that the symbolic and sensory discourses account for that it can be seen how the client account gives meaning to the kinds of people that might be present, or absent, in this world. The world she constructs is centred on ‘client’ therefore the clients, as kinds of people most likely to be present in this world, are those that eschew the more standardised office based therapeutic or learning environments. Instead, they are present in an outdoor world with horses.

To illustrate the differences between clients most likely to be present in GHEI world and clients least likely to be associated with GHEI world, we need to understand the constructs involved in other types of therapy. Miloni (2007) undertook a discursive study into client perceptions of office based counselling. In her study, the participants described the office therapy environment and attributed a function to each symbol identified within that particular therapeutic space. This is a useful study through which to explore the symbolism inherent in office based therapy in relation to GHEI.

In table 31 on the following page, those symbols have been equated to symbols surfaced in the client diaries for this GHEI study. What those symbols construct and normalise has been included, along with the functions of the constructs.
As can be seen in the office based study, client perception of power rested with the therapist. The practitioner in the office based therapy was seen to have a range of symbolic constructs that positioned them as authoritative experts. This ranged from books demonstrating knowledge, to golf pictures indicating affluence, and various scripted behaviours such as note taking and asking probing questions. This combination resulted in a practitioner/client dynamic whereby the practitioner was seen to be so powerful that they were seen as antagonistic by the client. This resulted in the client retaliating with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GHEI - Client Construct</th>
<th>GHEI - Function of Construct</th>
<th>Office Therapy Construct (Milioni 2007)</th>
<th>Office Therapy - Function of Construct (Milioni 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic and sensory discourse</td>
<td>Importance of embodied knowledge of client</td>
<td>Bookcase behind therapist desk</td>
<td>Importance of power and knowledge of therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate and latch</td>
<td>Client control in opening self to potentially emotional experience</td>
<td>Box of tissues</td>
<td>Expectation by therapist of emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hulk</td>
<td>Transformation from one emotional state to another</td>
<td>Bin</td>
<td>Emotional rubbish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine environment</td>
<td>Horses are levellers reacting on a personal level (non judgemental)</td>
<td>Golfing pictures on wall</td>
<td>Therapist affluence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Client defined own narrative in diary. Poems ‘belong’ to client</td>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>Represents fixed narrative by therapist and power in who can access the notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>Tactile and sensory</td>
<td>Withholding (therapist not giving anything of self)</td>
<td>Perceived as antagonistic and alienating – encouraging resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding and Reins</td>
<td>Power (control) with the client</td>
<td>Scripted behaviour (going to fetch client and asking probing questions)</td>
<td>Power with the therapist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Office Based Therapy versus GHEI
strategies to resist this power dynamic. The study by Miloni (2007) supports the work of Foucault (1995) who stipulated that where there is power there is resistance.

In contrast, for the GHEI client there is a distinct absence of any dialogue pertaining to the practitioner. The GHEI client defined their own narrative, whereas in the study by Miloni (2007) the client provided an account where their narrative was fixed by the practitioner via the client notes and who also controlled who could access the client story via the notes. This leads to one interpretation that GHEI clients are those who want to have control over their own stories, whereas office based clients may be willing to hand control of their stories to the practitioner.

It may be that non GHEI clients have simply not heard about the intervention, do not have access to equine work, are allergic to or fearful of horses, or could not afford the sessions. However, even if GHEI was readily available, the clients present in GHEI world and who remain there for a period of time are those most likely to value the less directive role of the practitioner. They may be clients for whom their own embodied knowledge holds more value that an authoritative practitioner.

6.3.7 What are the important things, ideas/tasks in the sort of world?

Whilst practitioners used technical language to define mental distress discourse, in this client study mental distress is singularly expressed within an embodied sensory context as the emotion of fear. Therefore, an important thing constructed within the client poems relates to the mental distress content of her overall experience, namely fear. For Ekman and Friesen (2003), fear is a basic emotion experienced across all cultures. However, Jack (2007) found facial expressions for fear had a cultural variation. For example, Asian cultures do not have the same expression for fear as western cultures, because Asian cultures generally find negative expressions of emotion in public socially unacceptable. This implies social and cultural processes play a large part in regulating how emotion is constructed and ultimately expressed. Therefore,
individuals are subject to the constraints of social and cultural practices when expressing their emotions or responding to others.

The social sharing of emotion leads to interpersonal emotional regulation. An expression of fear by the client would have been responded to by the practitioner according to regulated cultural and social processes. However, the meaning practitioners give to fear may not be the same meaning given by the client. This is illustrated in the practitioner study where it was seen that nine out of the ten participants had early and sustained contact with horses. This sustained contact with horses would have led them to have a level of competence in working with a large animal that, as a prey beast, is by its very nature fearful. Thus, practitioners had developed an ongoing expertise in working with a fear base. Grandin (2006) noted that horse trainers either used rough methods to deal with equine fears (breaking) or more gentle techniques (gentling). It was noted in the literature review that language has consequences for practice and whilst it is not known which of these methods the practitioner of the client who took part in this research used to work with fearful horses, there could be an assumption of practitioner knowledge of working with fear. This is even more relevant when the social discourse in the practitioner study is taken into account in which participants talked of working in the same way with both humans and horses.

Practitioners also talked about fear (Table 15, sections 4.4.2.2.3 and 4.4.5.1). One practitioner stated they would just not work with clients who were experienced in being around horses. One interpretation of this reluctance to work with people with experience of equines could be that this type of client is less likely to experience the same high levels of emotional arousal around horses. High levels of arousal result in less resistance to therapeutic interactions (Grandin 2006). Therefore horsey clients may show more resistance to GHEI than those clients with less equine knowledge. Although a horse can be a relatively safe, large, social, prey animal that will tolerate close proximity from humans, because of their size and potential impact, they can induce a level of fear that another animal may not.

This begs the question if high levels of emotional arousal is ethical in GHEI. Certainly clients can experience fear in anticipation of certain medical or psychiatric procedures where attempts are made to diminish, but not
necessarily completely eliminate fear. In this study, the client provided an account where the fear was overcome, but it does raise ethical issues in relation to the acceptability of invoking fear in a client. Nevertheless, it seems it was acceptable to the practitioners who were interviewed and to the client in this study.

6.3.8 What connotations does this particular word have?

Client symbolic discourse included the use of metaphor and symbol. Each metaphor generally has a number of symbols (Sullivan and Rees 2008). The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA 2005) make reference to metaphorical learning by suggesting the purpose of the horse is to act as a metaphor for relationships. However, EAGALA does not explain how it can be applied in GHEI practice.

In the case of the client diary the horse prompted the use of metaphor and symbol at differing levels:

- Microlevel – as an individual symbol
- Mesolevel – through autogenic metaphor (client generated)
- Macrolevel – as a vehicle for symbolic attributes, movement, space and time

At a micro level, table 32 illustrates the symbols involved in the metaphor of riding to illustrate the control metaphor created by the client in relation to a horse. The symbols are in italics.
Table 32: Micro Level – Symbols contained in Riding a Horse Metaphor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About the ride</th>
<th>And at what pace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And that I control the reins</td>
<td>I control the start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Whoa</td>
<td>And where I stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And how</td>
<td>And when I go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And at what speed</td>
<td>I control the now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At a Meso level, table 33 shows the client generated a metaphor about the Hulk to cope with her fear of interacting with horses.

Table 33: Meso Level – Autogenic Metaphor Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And me, I found some strength at last</th>
<th>Oh yes! Reveal the Hulk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the person deep inside</td>
<td>The one with green uncurled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who tears their clothes and rants and raves</td>
<td>Oh Yes! Now look out world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Metaphor is pervasive in all forms of discourse and is a fundamental means of constructing the world through language (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000, Hamilton, 2000). At some point our ancestors conceived of the notion to reason in time (past and future) as well as space (near and far), movement (fast and slow) and attributes (large and small). Pustejovsky (2005) argues the binary oppositions inherent in this way of constructing the world is based on the need to hunt for food. For example, describing prey as near or far, fast or slow, and large or small.

At a macro level, the symbols contained in the two metaphors employed by the client are vehicles for symbolic movement, attributes, space and time:
Riding a horse metaphor contained symbolic perceived control over **time** (*when and start*), **space** (*where and how*), and **movement** (*speed, pace, stop and start*).

This metaphor has symbolic **attributes** (*Hulk, green uncurled, strength, rant and rave*), **space** (*deep inside*), and **time** (*now*).

Taking time as an example, there are cultural constructions of time which are relayed in language. The Western world has a concept of time as linear, but there are other concepts such as the Asian view of time as cyclical (Helman 2005). Space too has social and cultural constructions when proxemics is considered. For instance, Hispanic populations have a closer body space distance for talking about personal issues than non Hispanic cultures (Axtell 1995). Knowledge of how to construct these cultural worlds develops over time through social exchange and the discourses available to us in our cultural and social subject positionings. Despite the many ambiguities in the discourses we employ, we still experience life as solid and real. Without discourses there are no social realities (Phillips and Hardy 2002).

The client diaries show conformity to these macro level symbols, which is hardly surprising given the social, relational and cultural nature of discursive constructions. What meaning would be given to these symbols outside of western ideologies is not known. What are known, are the connotations of drawing on these naturalised discursive resources aides social collaboration and the social exchange of meaning. In this way the client is able to share her account of GHEI to provide insight into the discursive resources available to her that give meaning to her experience.

**6.3.9 Where does this discourse locate guided human equine interactions? How will this location affect the way these interactions are viewed, by clients, professionals and others**

This discourse locates GHEI as client centred, where embodied knowledge is privileged, and with strong use of metaphor and symbol.
It does not locate GHEI in a mental distress discourse as framed by the practitioners and the USA website because that discourse was classified by use of technical language and institutional processes. However, having stipulated that the client account does not locate GHEI in a mental distress paradigm, it was noted in the practitioner study that there were blurred boundaries between mental and social. Where one discourse ended and another began was at times hard to distinguish, and so it was with this study.

The symbolic and sensory discourses were focused on transformation, or self change, which is a fundamental aim of many of the talking therapies in mental health. In addition, the client expressed embodied mental distress, as fear. There is no doubt that many clients in the mental health field experience fear. Yet what differentiates this client account from the practitioner account of mental distress is, in this study, the client is at the centre of the account. The horses are positioned on the periphery, and the practitioner is on the outer circle. Therefore, the diary entries locate GHEI within a social paradigm. The social discourse in the practitioner study positioned the client as the expert, followed by the horses, and then the practitioner, in the same way as this client study. This social paradigm inhabits an intersection with the metaphysical in the client diaries, as according to the metaphysical discourse in the UK website, insight and self actualisation are surfaced as client goals, which parallels the client account.

The use in all three studies of the horse as a symbol and metaphor, albeit in many differing ways, means practice may be viewed by professionals as being contained within the metaphor therapy or metaphorical learning context. Metaphor and symbol may assist a client with testing different and competing discourses, in much the same way as the client did in this study. It was discussed earlier in this chapter that taking a different subject position to ‘experiment’ with new discursive resources has consequences. More so, when it involves dissolving a privileged feminine discourse such as fearful female to favour a less socially acceptable account for a female, such as angry male. With metaphor and symbol the client can try out these less damaging subject positions to draw on the resources available to them in that guise. Having a large, living, breathing, sensory and symbolic vehicle as a resource to prompt isomorphism appears to be the basis of GHEI.
6.4 Summary of the Client Study

Using discourse analysis, this chapter analysed a client diary in an investigation into the connection between language, discourses, and the social construction of GHEI. The client submitted a diary in the form of two poems which in themselves had a prosodic pattern of intonation and rhythm. The dominant discourses surfaced in these poems were grounded in her embodied knowledge to speak about the symbolic and the sensory.

These discourses placed the client in three different subject positions. The first was fearful female, proceeding to angry male, and finally person in control. Different subject positions only have a finite number of discursive resources available to them. Thus, the practitioners and creators of the websites in the two previous studies had different subject positions from the client, so they pulled on more authoritative discourses. This is the plurality of knowledge where those in dissimilar subject positions create knowledge for different functions.

Discourses are never found in their entirety (Phillips and Hardy 2002) so only elements of the mental distress, metaphysical and social discourses highlighted by the practitioners surfaced in this study. For the client, the mental distress discourse related to fear of the horses, the social discourse related to relational boundaries, whilst the metaphysical discourse related to the use of metaphor and symbol.

The role the client constructed for herself was to demonstrate insight and change through a shift in subject positioning. This is the same role afforded to clients in all three of the dominant discourses accounted for in both previous studies. However, in this study the embodied knowledge of the client is privileged in that move towards change.

The role of the practitioner in the client account was not to demonstrate authoritative knowledge through practitioner/client power dynamics, but to act as a catalyst for the client/equine interaction. The role of the horse was symbolic as a vehicle for isomorphic symbol and metaphor, which was surfaced throughout the diary entries at the micro, meso and macro levels. In
this way the client was able to share her account of GHEI to provide insight into the discursive resources available to her that gave meaning to her experience.

### 6.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Client Study

Due to attrition there was a loss of two clients. Despite the amount of data generated initially appearing minimal, especially when compared to the two previous studies, the diary submission did provide an opportunity to look more in depth at one account.

Despite concerns at the outset of the study regarding retrospective completion, this client completed her diary retrospectively for both entries. This was despite alerting her by text, so logging was not effective in this case. One has to question at what point logging might become an intrusion into a participants personal space. What is agreed at the outset with the client may be open to change. It is suggested that any future free text diary studies allow for this potential and logging is discussed in more depth with participants.

One rationale for retrospective completion of the diary entries was offered by the client at the debriefing. She found the processing of the GHEI sessions took her some time. For days she would think about a session and was reluctant to commit pen to paper until she was sure she knew what she wanted to say. Completion of free text diaries in a therapeutic style context must take this into consideration. Debriefing in diary studies is a valuable way of understanding more about utilising this tool in research studies. Despite this retrospection, it did not detract from the data obtained which is valued and has ultimately aided understanding of how a client accounts for GHEI.

Despite apprehension with regards to electronic diaries and confidentiality, the client submitted her diary by email. When concerns were expressed about this, she reported having no concerns herself as she would like to get the poems published at some point.

Whilst discourse analysis is an exciting framework for researching social reality, there are challenges in applying it in differing contexts, and with
individuals in diverse positions. The discourses in this study have been contrasted with discourses in the previous two studies. The discourses themselves do not produce meaning; they are made meaningful through interpretation. An attempt has been made in this thesis to interpret discursive constructions of GHEI from the contrasting subject positions of practitioner, marketer, and client. By pulling all three discourses identified at the outset in the practitioner study, through the two subsequent studies, it is anticipated the thesis in its entirety gives meaning to the discursive construction of GHEI.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7 Structure of this Chapter

This chapter commences with a discussion on the insights gained into the functions of the dominant discourses identified in the three studies that comprise this thesis. The cultural connotations of the research are then discussed. The chapter concludes with the broader implications of the research for GHEI practice.

7.1 Key Findings from the Studies

The aim of this research was to provide an account of the increasing involvement of horses in therapeutic and learning practice by asking how GHEI is discursively constructed. This was achieved through three different studies that included speech, text and graphics, where each study looked at GHEI from the differing positions of practitioner, client, and the marketing of GHEI.

These studies provided a wealth of insights into the discursive construction of GHEI and the meaning given to GHEI practice. The ensuing challenge has been to condense these insights into key findings to inform practitioners, clients, and related organisations as GHEI continues to evolve.

In each study, discussion took place on the function of the dominant discourses identified. For example, the mental distress discourse identified in the practitioner study had an authoritative function in service provision by providing credibility for GHEI practice. In the website study, the mental distress discourse was surfaced as having a categorising function by equating mental distress and equine industries. The function of the mental distress discourse in the client study, although limited, did facilitate the expression of embodied personal emotion. Therefore, it can be seen that the mental distress discourse had differing functions according to the context of use and the subject positioning of the person drawing on that discourse.
Five dominant discourses were surfaced from the three studies: Social, Metaphysical, Mental Distress, Symbolic and Sensory. When taking into account their functions as identified across all three studies, there are three differing levels of function that can be identified. The micro function equates to the function of a discourse at an individual level, the meso function at a service level, whilst the macro function equates to the function of a discourse at a health and social care system level.

The micro and meso functions of each of the dominant discourses have already been discussed within the previous studies. Table 34 outlines the function of each discourse illuminated through the studies alongside the section in this thesis where discussion took place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Provision of boundaries</td>
<td>6.3.4. Table 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Normalising practice</td>
<td>4.4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Client as expert</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Expression of spiritual/philosophical beliefs</td>
<td>4.4.4</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Facilitates use of metaphor and symbol</td>
<td>6.3.4. Table 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Relational and spatial dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Facilitates the expression of emotion</td>
<td>6.3.4. Table 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distress</td>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Authoritative to provide credibility to practice</td>
<td>4.4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Categorising GHEI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Provides for differing subject positioning</td>
<td>6.3.1.1 Figure 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Facilitates change</td>
<td>6.3.1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Indirect Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Expression of sensory arousal</td>
<td>6.3.4. Table 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>A discursive resource for a range of senses</td>
<td>6.3.1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Discursive Framework</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It is the macro level function of the dominant discourses outlined in Table 34 that forms the basis of this discussion chapter where each of the dominant discourses will be discussed in turn. It is important to note that just as the discourses were woven together in the studies forming this research, so the functions of the discourses have points where they intersect.

### 7.1.1 Social Discourse - Client as Expert

In the client study, the micro function of the social discourse was noted as the client putting in boundaries with the horses to create a personal space (section 6.3.4. table 29). In the practitioner study, the meso function of the social discourse was interpreted as normalising GHEI practice (section 4.4.4) by placing it at the pragmatic and workable level of social interaction and within a general context that related herd dynamics to family life. Looking across all three studies, it appears there is a macro function to the social discourse which serves to place the ‘client as the expert’.

Before continuing on to explain the rationale for the function of the social discourse in placing the client as the expert, consideration is given to how the term client has been conceptualised. The term client accounts for how the people who use GHEI have been constructed in this thesis. The term has its origins in social work practice since the 1970s. McLaughlin (2009) believes the term implies a power relationship between those availing themselves of a service and those delivering it and discusses the use of the term Experts by Experience (EBE) instead of client. Whilst the practitioner acquires their expertise through training and studying, experts by experience gain their expertise from life. The term EBE can include carers, but it does not generally take into account practitioners who are, or who have been clients, and who walk the liminal path between authoritative and embodied knowledge.

Terms such as client, EBE, consumer, and service user are all underpinned by their own ideologies. For example, in the practitioner study it was noted that practitioners could act as a positive ‘catalyst’ for change, so in this context a client could act as ‘inhibitor’ to change. However, use of such terminology suggests a binary relationship between client and practitioner, rather than a
symbiotic one. So, the usage of any of these terms in relation to the writing for this thesis results in the researcher discursively constructing a relational dynamic. Although the writing for this thesis employed the term client as a collective term for ease of understanding, it is acknowledged that those who involve themselves in GHEI should firstly and firmly be defined as individuals with valued embodied knowledge.

In the social discourse some practitioners positioned the client as the expert (section 4.4.3 Figure 2). The client also positioned herself at the centre of the discourses, thus taking a subject position of expert. However, consideration needs to be given to why the client might have been placed differently by practitioners using other dominant discourses. One consideration might be the tension inherent in 'client as expert' where the subject positions of 'individual at the centre' and 'individual who is fearful', as in the client study, appear to conflict. Both define a simultaneous social relationship between client and practitioner, but each with differing power relations.

For the practitioner, 'client as expert' positions the practitioner in a contesting dual role, where primacy is either given to acting as a catalyst for the experience and then standing back, or moving in to offer support or action when fear or risk is identified. This standing back or moving in implies a spatial distancing between client and practitioner, as well as a relational one. This will be explored in more detail in the following section on the macro function of the metaphysical discourse.

Some practitioners may be able to juggle these contesting tensions better than others. However, in GHEI it seems there are other practitioners present to assist with these tensions, which are the horse/s. If the practitioners imbue the horse with a co-therapist role (section 4.4.2 2 Table 15) in the practitioner/client relationship, then they are giving themselves permission to adopt just one subject position of standing back both metaphorically and physically and letting the horse move in. In this scenario the meaning given to the horse involves it being present much more for the practitioner than the client. Practitioners from the varied background professions described GHEI as easier than other interventions, perhaps because there is less tension in that particular relational positioning. Mostly they had given themselves permission
to stand back, and let either the client take the role of the expert, or the horse, as in the metaphysical discourse.

It seems the relational dynamics of the client/practitioner dyad can be affected by practitioners positioning the client as the expert and drawing on available discursive resources to support this positioning. However, if clients are constructed as passive recipients at an individual, societal and cultural level, they may adopt this role despite the practitioner attempting to position them as expert. Ultimately, discourses construct the person, but the person also constructs self through drawing on specific discourses.

Burr (2008 p.180) notes that one of the criticisms of constructionism is the loss of ‘self’. Within this argument is that individual experiences are relegated to the side effects of discourses. However, this would not account for why the person who participated in the client study worked so hard with the horses to claim the position of expert by experience, as well as other subject positions. To do this, she used symbolic strategies to adopt alternative positions and draw on the discourses available to her in the varying subject positions she assumed such as angry male and fearful woman. Whilst it was discussed in the client study that there were challenges to be faced in maintaining contesting subject positions (section 6.4.1.1), the symbolic strategies she used in moving to alternative subject positions showed she did have a certain degree of agency in determining which discursive resources she engaged with to place herself at the centre of the intervention.

Horses have no spoken or written language; therefore they have no self agency. They are open to human constructions of their positioning in GHEI. It is hardly surprising then, that in all three studies, the role of the horse was varied and included a social role. They were co-therapist, emotion inducer, helper for socialising humans, aide to connection, and they acted as a living breathing metaphor. It is not known if adopting all these varied subject positions, and at times simultaneously, created any tension for the horses themselves. However, there is a growing recognition that there may be some detriment to horses in participating in GHEI. For example, Suthers-McCabe and Albano (2004) reported an increase in stress, as measured by cortisol levels, in horses working with individuals who were classified as having extreme
emotional problems. It seems horses may be demonstrating they are equally subject to the iatrogenic effects of human relational dynamics.

The website study did not demonstrate a dominant social discourse equating to the practitioners’ account. So, it was interesting to note that in both the UK and USA websites it was the practitioners, not the client nor horse, that were surfaced as the experts even though the UK website had a dominant metaphysical discourse. The horses were secondary in both sites and were provided with characteristics, history, names, pictures, and idiosyncrasies. Yet in neither website do we hear anything of the client voices, thus positioning them on the periphery. So, it appears from the website study that it is not monetary exchange that necessarily places the client at the centre, at least not in marketing materials, where it could be safely assumed that clients might be central. In addition, subject positioning in the website study provided a practitioner/client/horse placement that was not accounted for in neither the practitioner nor client study, as will be seen in the following section in Figure 6.

7.1.2 Metaphysical Discourse - Relational Dynamics

In the practitioner study, it was noted that a micro function of the metaphysical discourse was for practitioners to be able to express their personal spiritual and philosophical beliefs and relate these to their GHEI practice (section 4.4.4). In the client study, the metaphysical discourse meso function was to facilitate the expression of embodied knowledge through the use of metaphor and symbol (section 6.3.4. table 29). At a macro level, a function of the metaphysical discourse can be seen as one that impacts on the relational dynamics between clients and practitioners.

It was noted in the previous section that a function of the social discourse was to position the client at the centre of the discourse as the expert. Each of the dominant discourses in this thesis surfaced a practitioner, horse and client subject positioning. In the metaphysical discourse in the practitioner study, it was the horse that was central as the expert (section 4.4.3 figure 2).
All possible subject positionings between client, horse, and practitioner were drawn up. These were then reviewed in relation to the subject positionings that were surfaced across all three studies. This presentation revealed that there were two possible subject positionings not accounted for in any of the studies, as Figure 6 on the following page illustrates.
Figure 6: Subject Positions from the Practitioner, Website, and Client Studies

A  Social Discourse
  Client Discourse

B  Metaphysical Discourse

C  Mental Distress Discourse

D  Website Discourse

E  Not accounted for across the studies

F  Not accounted for across the studies
There is one key difference between the subject positionings that surfaced from the studies (A-D) and the two subject positionings that did not (E,F). That is, the practitioner is positioned in between the client and the horse.

In contrast to office based therapy, a client involved in GHEI is not sat in a chair facing the practitioner, but is outside in a large arena, paddock, or field. This results in client and practitioner not being in close physical proximity to each other. Yet, when interpreting Figure 6 and the relationship between the client, horse and practitioner it appears there is a further dynamic to this physical distancing that includes not only the spatial, but also relational distancing. So, it seems it is important in GHEI for the client to remain connected in some way to the horse, whoever is positioned as the expert, in order to provide for a relational distancing between client and practitioner. This relational distancing is achieved in all the subject positioning accounted for in the studies (Figure 6, A-D) by the positioning of the client and horse alongside each other. Even from the client perspective, she did not position herself physically next to the practitioner in her text. She placed herself in direct physical contact with the horses. Nor did she identify any sort of relationship with the practitioner, thereby demonstrating not only spatial distancing from the practitioner but relational distancing as well.

Spatial distancing is important to horses because the majority of their interpersonal communication is through body language. They wield social power through moving other horses and occupying space (Morris 2000). Close physical contact such as mutual grooming, where horses massage each other with their mouths, only takes place only between bonded animals (Morris 2000). This implies a relational as well as spatial dynamic to their socialising. Return to the metaphor first accounted for in the practitioner study where equine herd dynamics were related to human socialisation (section 4.4.2.3 table 16). In office based therapy practitioners may try to verbally enter a client’s physical and emotional space without any form of pre-bonding, yet in the equine world this would most likely result in posturing, threats or kicks and bites. Put another way, this invasion of spatial and relational space would result in resistance to a perceived threat.
The theory of Social Grooming postulated by Dunbar (1998) suggests that language evolved in humans when expanding group sizes resulted in our inability to physically groom each other to aide bonding. For Dunbar (1998), it is now language that facilitates our social ‘grooming’ of each other, in order to develop and maintain relationships. It is language that also accounts for the power dynamics inherent in that grooming. Yet, in office based therapy, such as that described by Miloni (2007) in section 6.4.6, the client/practitioner relational dynamic is enacted in a context where nothing of the practitioner is known or shared with the client due to the concept of professional boundaries. This relational dynamic was seen to place the practitioner in a more powerful position that the client (Miloni 2007). This approach can distance the practitioner relationally. However, in office based therapy, unlike GHEI, they are not simultaneously distanced both relationally and spatially. It could be postulated that, where relational distancing occurs without spatial distancing, this can lead to interplay of power dynamics between the client and the practitioner which may result in what is generally termed ‘resistance’ in the therapeutic world.

The spatial and relational distancing surfaced in GHEI may account for the apparent success practitioners cited in engaging ‘hard to reach’ individuals. There may be no need for practitioners to actually try and reach or bond with some clients, but instead distance themselves both spatially and relationally. However, this distancing stance is the antithesis to contemporary teachings on the client/practitioner relationship, where it is considered the role of the practitioner to actively engage a client in a deep and interpersonal relationship (Stevenson and Cutcliffe 2006 p.174). Nevertheless, being distanced both relationally and spatially may enhance the role of the practitioner to one of being alongside a client, but at a distance, rather than having to do for a client. This being rather than doing can be equated to terminology used by Burr (2003 p.197), whereby being is extra-discursive. That is, not having to engage the client in deep and meaningful language theoretically structured to ‘treat’. Being involves existing in a realm outside of spoken language and discourse, which is the metaphysical realm, the realm where horses exist.

What is generally missing in institutional discourses is the metaphysical; the spiritual or philosophical account for meaning in how and why an intervention has been constructed. Without a fundamental metaphysical basis to account
for practice, any intervention is constructed only within the thinking, feeling and doing, and not the being. In authoritative terminology, this is the cognitive, affective, and behavioural, yet as humans we have constructed our reality to account for the spiritual, or an essence. Therefore, it seems that something fundamental is missing from the construction of many forms and theories of mental health, learning, and social care. The discursive construction of GHEI has accounted for the metaphysical, which is a socially constructed concept involving spirit or essence. Yet, this construction further accounts for meaning within an individualised and personalised frame and not necessarily as part of an organised belief system. A Foucauldian approach would avoid sourcing meaning as emanating from individuals alone, yet practitioners seemed almost free to select and reject from wide ranging discursive resources on the metaphysical. Expressing their personal metaphysical beliefs may have helped a practitioner connect with themselves, clients, and the horses, rather than just their profession. A metaphysical stance, or a relationship with a bigger picture, may ground practitioners in practice that is meaningful to them. In this way, the metaphysical discourse provided them with yet another subject position from which to draw down additional discursive resources, thereby expanding their repertoire and helping to blur the boundaries between the different professions involved.

It has already been discussed that the horse can provide practitioners with permission to stand back and privilege the embodied knowledge of the client, thereby impacting on that dyadic relationship. However, it appears the horse can also impact on relational dynamics between practitioners. For example, there was a redefining of professional boundaries in the practitioner study. Professionals such as the occupational therapist, psychiatrist, nurse, social worker, complimentary therapist, and equine specialists were all equal practitioners in the delivery of GHEI. In this, the boundaries between their background professions and their GHEI practice were blurred. For example, the psychiatrist did not draw on a dominant mental distress discourse. Instead, the practitioners weaved together discourses, drawing on familiar themes such as mental distress. Thus, they created a new language around the involvement of horses in therapeutic and learning interventions that provides GHEI with just enough authoritative knowledge for it to stand alone, outside of mainstream mental illness service provision.
7.1.3 Mental Distress Discourse – Categorising GHEI

At a micro, or individual level, the mental distress discourse in the client study functioned to facilitate the expression of personal emotion (section 6.3.4. table 29). At a meso, or service level, it had a technical and authoritative function which provided GHEI with credibility to practice within contemporary health and social care systems (section 4.4.4). At a macro level, a function of the mental distress discourse can be interpreted as serving to categorise GHEI. The importance of this categorisation was first noted in the website study (section 5.3.1.2 table 19) where the parallels between the mental distress and equine industries were illustrated. It was concluded that this may have led practitioners to believe that working with horses and people with personal experience of mental distress was a natural progression.

The use of mental distress discourse in this research does categorise GHEI within the wider mental health system. GHEI in itself in the UK does not offer diagnostic facilities and prescribing regimes, so it can only be an adjunct to acute mental illness services. However, GHEI is situated in a power relations network where professions such as social work, psychiatry, education, mental health nursing, alternative or complimentary practice, equine specialists and occupational therapy, all play an equal and constituent part. Together these practitioners could form a force to contest the hegemony inherent in the mental illness system by formulating new language around GHEI. As Hacking (1999) argues, new language brings into existence new ways of accounting for humankind.

Categorising GHEI as an adjunct service for institutions, such as psychiatry, gives a level of technological primacy to practitioners and practice, but detracts from any value inherent in human interaction with the natural and inevitable through focusing only on the constructed. After a long history of living symbiotically alongside horses, the development of a system whereby humans have to be facilitated by ‘experts’ to set up an interaction with a horse, facilitate ongoing sessions, help process what is happening, and ultimately get paid a fee, means that we are further losing our sense of connection with the natural and inevitable of this world.
It seems we are constructing more and more technological realities. These are realities that are remote from the natural and inevitable. From the meaning practitioners gave to the term connection (section 4.4.2.3.1) in the metaphysical discourse woven through the mental distress discourse, it appears that horses may have a valuable role to play in helping humankind re-connect mentally (mental distress discourse), socially (social discourse) and spiritually (metaphysical discourse).

One way the categorisation of GHEI differs from the more generalised mental illness system is in the categorisation of risk. Seen through a mental illness lens, there are inherent risks to consider that might befall the client with experience of acute mental distress, as well as the wider community from the effects of their behaviour. In the same way there are risks portrayed in working so close to horses. Thus, it is interesting to note that all three studies constructed a GHEI world where risk was absent. Although risk was present in the website study, the risk was held by a potential client through their not buying into GHEI. It is acknowledged that this is in all likelihood a marketing strategy designed to sell GHEI, yet it does position the potential client as at risk instead of as an active participant in an equitable relationship. Nevertheless, by the practitioner not privileging health and safety over client autonomy, any participant would be able to account for the meaning they gave to risk on an individual basis, thereby valuing their autonomy to keep themselves safe.

The lack of talk on risk frees clients to be all they could be, whereas dialogue which focuses on terms like limitations, problems, and risks, linguistically emasculate clients (George et al. 1990). Therefore, it is understandable that being placed in a subject position where a client is seen as containing only problems results in what, in therapeutic terms, is coined resistance; returning once again to Foucault’s notion of where there is power there is resistance (Foucault 1995). Problem orientated language is often employed by practitioners who are committed to working with clients, but through a lens where authoritative knowledge is given primacy over the embodied.

Resistance, as discussed in the previous section, has been defined as a response to a perceived threat (Patterson 2000). Certainly the relational dynamic of perceived practitioner authority can result in the interplay of psychological resistance whereby the client ‘hides’ aspects of themselves from
Yet, practitioners in this research talked of GHEI as causing less, or even no resistance. The horses, when positioned as expert, do not facilitate a discursive power dynamic in their interaction with the participant. No doubt they would try to assert their own power dynamic with a client through the use of occupying space and posturing, but the effects of this power dynamic are highly visible and not open to the same misinterpretation that human power dynamics are. In addition, a participant can overtly learn to resist this power display by using different strategies (*take deep breaths, count to ten, visualise a bubble* – client study). Client resistance against power dynamics can then be played out with the horses in GHEI and not the practitioner, even if the client believes horses pose a physical threat.

One further way the categorisation of GHEI sits outside of the mainstream mental illness system is in the way GHEI was generally not found to include joint problem solving. In this way, participants do not have to fight against discursive restraints imposed on them as patients in need of treatment. According to the client study, the role of the client in GHEI is not a recipient of a talking therapy, guided in some way by the therapist. Rather, the client played a physically and cognitively active role. As experts and not patients, clients have to find their own positioning, work through their own fears and emotions, assess their own risks, and ultimately determine their own lives. Whilst this approach may or may not be appropriate for some clients experiencing acute and distressing symptoms of mental illness, it does fit with those individuals wishing to enhance their emotional capacity, develop their interpersonal skills, change a particular aspect in their lives, or work towards self actualisation.

The final note on the macro function of the mental distress discourse in this research suggests that categorisation need not necessarily incorporate all the elements of a system. The mental distress discourse does serve to categorise GHEI within the field of mental illness and mental health. However, the weaving of other discourses, especially the metaphysical, as well as the absence of certain elements such as risk, provides for a categorisation that is authoritative on one level, yet detracts from it on another. In section 4.4.2.3.1 it was discussed that practitioner beliefs on the interconnectedness of the universe related to the Gaia hypothesis. Perhaps this connection with the universe involves a synthesis between ancient and modern discourses. The
centaur myth shows that at one point humankind was able to construct a strong connection between human and horse. It seems it is the horse that now provides for the categorisation of GHEI at an intersection between past discourses where essence and healing (metaphysical) were privileged and contemporary discourses where normalisation (social) and treatment (mental distress) are authoritative (see sections 5.3.8, 5.4, 6.4.9, and 7.1.4).

7.1.4 Symbolic Discourse – Indirect Approach

The function of the symbolic discourse at a micro or individual level was to provide for different subject positioning (section 6.4.1.1. figure 5) whilst at a meso level it functioned to facilitate change (section 6.4.1.1). At a macro, or a health and social care system level, the symbolic discourse function was to provide for the use of metaphor as a tool for an indirect approach to change.

Throughout the three studies it was evident that the horse was positioned as a living, breathing metaphor. For some practitioners the use of metaphor was overt, whilst for other practitioners the use of symbol and metaphor was simply an inherent part of their practice as much as it is in our daily lives. Use of symbol and metaphor was autogenic, as in client generated, or it was generated by the practitioner. Central to the use of metaphor (section 4.4.7 figure 3) was processing, where it was determined that processing a metaphor took place in different ways according to the dominant discourse. For example, the practitioner who constructed GHEI through a dominant mental distress lens might generate a metaphor themselves and then lead the client in processing it. The practitioner functioning through a metaphysical lens might leave the client to self process the metaphors they self generated. For example, in the client study, the diary of the client clearly showed how she employed autogenic symbol and metaphor to illuminate the meaning she gave to her sessions with the horses.

It seems the involvement of symbol and metaphor centred on the horse is a fundamental function of the symbolic discourse in the discursive construction of GHEI. Yet, it also seems that it is used in different ways. In trying to graphically represent a mind map of how metaphor is applied in GHEI practice
proved challenging. This is because the mind map involved differing and interacting layers of metaphor use. The basis of the mind map that follows involves the horse as a metaphor within a linguistic, conceptual and therapeutic frame.

Figure 7 shows two enmeshed spirals. One spiral represents what is consciously constructed by a practitioner or a client. The other spiral represents what remains beneath the surface invisible to conscious construction. It is through processing a metaphor that the invisible can become visible, or to put it another way, the processing of a metaphor facilitates what lies beneath to surface. As Gergen (2009 p.35) stipulates, metaphors are central aspects to our ways of understanding reality.

**Figure 7: Mind Map of Metaphor Use that Discursively Constructs GHEI**
Figure 7 attempts to provide a pictorial representation of the insights gained, across all three studies, on the use of metaphor as an indirect approach to change. The diagram is a simplified double helix which is a mathematical concept containing a double stranded molecule twisted into a spiral staircase (Wells 1991). The stairs across and the intertwined ropes are symbiotic and provide an iterative three dimensional structure, best viewed in motion, on which to make visible the role and function of metaphor use in the discursive construction of GHEI.

In this helix, the linguistic relates to metaphor use which can be found in our cultural everyday use of language as a matter of course. For example, the term ‘barn environment’ (section 5.3.4) was surfaced in the American website. This is not a term that is generally used in the UK where ‘stable yard’ is more commonly applied. The linguistic also relates to dead metaphors where a term, such as stable yard, was originally a metaphor but then developed a sense of its own. The linguistic includes the combination of things not normally combined such as the ‘horse as a mirror’ (section 5.3.8 table 22).

The conceptual element of the helix relates to the use of metaphor in creating new relationships between language and thought. This can be found in all three studies where horses were assigned feelings or characteristics that created new perceptions. For example, emailing Linus the horse in the website study (section 5.3.1.2 table 19), horses as co-therapists in the practitioner study (section 4.4.2.2 table 15), and horses seeing humans as their tea in the client study (section 6.4 table 24). The conceptual element also provides for abstract thought where people can make sense of their experiences (Vico 1975).

The final section of the helix relates to the use of metaphor in GHEI as a therapeutic approach that offers the opportunity to provide an alternative perspective on something the client may want to change. In this, the horse acts as a sensory metaphor to aide construction of new meaning.

Running horizontal across the two strands of the helix are the stairs. Each stair in the helix is one of a pair and the stairs combine in complex sequences. Each stair in this mind map links what has been consciously constructed either
by the client or the practitioner, with what is generally invisible to the practitioner, the client, or both. Each horizontal stair equates to a category of metaphor identified from the research for this thesis. Whilst the linguistic element of the mind map addresses everyday metaphor use in language, the conceptual offers a frame for notions that require further understanding. The therapeutic part offers an opportunity to indirectly facilitate an alternative perspective on something the client may want to change. Appendix 10 provides examples from the three studies to justify a place on the helix.

All three studies involved the use of the horse as a metaphor, so it seems that metaphor use in GHEI is not incidental but an integral part of practice. Having a large living, breathing, sensory and symbolic vehicle, such as the horse, as a resource to prompt isomorphism appears to be at the basis of the construction of GHEI. If, as Schmitt (2005) argues, the use of metaphor is predominately unconscious, or invisible, then the therapeutic element of metaphor use in GHEI would involve the practitioner recognising an autogenic metaphor and assisting the client in processing. It was also identified in the practitioner study that not all practitioners assisted a client with processing. This bears out in the client study where it was interpreted that the relevance of metaphor use for the client was in the opportunity it afforded her for trying out new subject positions without any apparent processing taking place with the practitioner. Even without the practitioner assisting with problem solving, the client managed to change subject positions.

This change through the application of metaphor equates to the work of Erickson (1985) who first documented that use of metaphor in therapeutic work can shift a client's frame of reference. Using a client's own frame of reference is in keeping with the client as the expert, as in the function of the social discourse. For example, in the research by Milioni (2007) in section 6.4.6, her respondent felt a metaphor she had used about riding a horse had been hijacked by her therapist. In the client study for this thesis, the participant created autogenic metaphors such as the Hulk and taking the reins, which did not appear to be hijacked by a practitioner. Seiden (2004) suggests that approaching a situation metaphorically or indirectly rather than directly, allows the client to retain control over the depth and duration of the exploration. So, it seems the macro function of the symbolic discourse is to provide a system whereby both the client and the practitioner approach a
situation indirectly. This indirect approach positions GHEI practice as egalitarian, and the client at the centre as the expert taking the reins. An indirect approach also contributes to a relational as well as spatial distancing between the client and practitioner through the practitioner being placed in a less directive positioning. This positioning equates to being relationally distanced but alongside a client, rather than overtly directing or doing.

7.1.5 Sensory Discourse – Discursive Framework

The micro function of the sensory discourse was identified as facilitating the verbal expression of sensory arousal (section 6.3.4. table 30). The meso function of the sensory discourse was equated to the horse providing a discursive resource for a range of senses such as smell, touch, and visual stimulus (section 6.4.1.2). At times it was hard to separate the horse itself from the sensory discourse in as much as the horse is a living, breathing sensory stimulus that humans can relate to in ways through which we discursively construct our sensory experiences. Senses such as touch, sight, smell, and feelings all have an impact on how GHEI has been discursively constructed. Whilst there is nothing in the studies to indicate the horse itself as providing for an auditory sensory experience, this might be related to horses having limited vocal capacity. Nevertheless, McCormac (1985) suggests that metaphor is a fusion of sense with sound. Therefore, verbalising and hearing the processing of a metaphor to do with horses equates to an auditory sensory experience.

It is this experience involving so many senses that leads to the interpretation of the macro function of the sensory discourse. This is its ability to provide for the completion of a discursive framework on GHEI that incorporates all the dominant discourses identified in this research. A starting point to explain how the sensory discourse completes a discursive framework on GHEI is to consider that the client did not demonstrate the same dominant discourses as identified in the practitioner and website studies. This is not surprising as the participant was using language available to her from a different subject position and for a contrasting purpose. Therefore, she did not draw from those discourses available to practitioners. However, there were still links with practitioner
discourses (section 6.3.4. table 30), but from an embodied symbolic and sensory account rather than an authoritative or professional account.

It has been argued in this thesis, that only a finite number of discursive resources are available to us, whatever our subject position (sections 5.1, 6.4.1.1., 6.4.2.1, and 6.5). We have been conditioned from birth into constructing humankind through our use of language. This has resulted in one contemporary western account of humankind as determining our own thinking, feeling and doing. We have constructed life and death into a journey that embraces many disparate philosophies and religions where humankind across history and culture has constructed discourses around an essence such as a soul, or a spirit.

This thinking, feeling, and doing, with essence are a discursive framework that has consequences for how interventions are constructed. For example, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is constructed around the assumption that what people think, effects how they feel, and what they do (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2009). The challenge then for any researcher is to be able to stand outside of these human constructions, of which they are an intrinsic part, and question inherent assumptions on how reality is constructed through language use.

The way humankind has constructed our own being into thinking, feeling and doing, with essence, is reflected in the discursive construction of GHEI through the five dominant discourses surfaced across all three studies. Figure 8 outlines these discourses and relates them to how we have socially constructed our reality.
Discursive frameworks order reality in a particular way (Ballinger and Cheek 2006). Within this thinking, feeling and doing (with essence) framework, humankind has been ordered as an individual species. Animals are constructed as an ‘other’ without the same ability as humankind to think, feel and do. Whilst otherness is generally associated with marginalised groups who have been robbed of voice, as Levinas (1985) argues, the self cannot have a concept of itself without the other. He believed that an encounter with an other is a privileged phenomenon. He also believed that self and other are mirror images of each other. This is an interesting concept when the statement ‘the horse is a mirror’ is taken into consideration (see section 5.3.8 table 22 and Figure 4). Within the line of thinking promoted by Levinas, humans can account for a sense of self through a privileged encounter with a horse. Certainly, the client study surfaced a sense of self through her account of changing subject positions, from fearful female, to angry male, to person in control. Her account of self is individually unique in the way she weaved the sensory and symbolic discourses available to her in each position. Thus, she created an exclusive self from the available song lines. That song has its own music, or euphony.
Horses, as others, have also been constructed in western culture as without essence, such as Christian texts where humans were created superior to animals (Preece and Fraser 2000). Yet, in myth the very being of horses was of essence. Pegasoi, unicorns, Sleipnir, and kelpies are all mystical horses. Horses have also been the bearers of essence such as Epona, Kalki the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, the horsemen of the apocalypse, and the hippoi athanatoi immortal horses of the Greek gods. These are all global examples of horses that have held other worldly constructions. However, we have a new world construction that separates humans from horses and constructs them as an other. We also have a contesting old world discourse that exists today in the metaphysical discursive construction of GHEI that unites human and horse through essence and healing.

This interspecies unity can be seen through the construction of GHEI in these studies. At times, there was a blurring of species boundaries that culminated in uniting human and horse, much like the myth of the centaurs. From practitioners seeing clients as a part of a herd, to their construction of a horse as a co-therapist, equines were not always a separate entity from the humans in the studies. Instead, they were surfaced with different subject positions which fed into a system where interspecies interaction and discourse was a focus for change.

It appears the macro functions of all the dominant discourses surfaced in this thesis are symbiotic, with the macro function of the sensory discourse completing the final part of the discursive framework. It achieves this through the structuring all five of the dominant discourses against how we order our reality through our senses.

### 7.2 Cultural Implications

English is an international language but it is spoken and written in differing historical, social, and cultural contexts. Gergen (2009 p.27) believes we become cultural imperialists by 'trampling on the realities' of others and claiming superiority of voice, especially in the discounting of spiritual discourses. Foucault (1972) described discourses as historically situated ways
of accounting for knowledge where tracing the origins, or the genealogy, of a discourse can reinforce its power or render it docile. In this thesis it was seen, in the website study, that the tracing of the metaphysical discourse on horses provided one account of the meaning given to contemporary constructions of GHEI in a UK context. In this example, the metaphysical was manifested with Celtic influence which included the cultural implications of the horses involved. Despite a wide range of horse breeds and colours available across both countries, the paint horse in the American website provided an image of Native American origins, whilst the white horses in the British website reflected a Celtic influence. Tracing the origins of the metaphysical discourse also revealed the presence of horses in long standing myths relating to essence and healing and how that has now moved to privilege treatment and socialisation. It seems that, in the discursive construction of GHEI, the privileging of the metaphysical is once again coming to the fore by means of practitioner inclusion of this discourse in their accounts.

Foucault (1972) believed there is a relationship between the subject and the social conditions in how discourses are illuminated. We are now faced with a global social network where discourses on GHEI, as the subject, are shared across continents and deposited into diverse social conditions. What the website study sought to illuminate was if, and how, practitioners in Britain are adapting discourses emanating from America to account for social conditions in this country.

Although the main thrust of GHEI over the past years has been led by America, the website study highlighted that GHEI discourses are amenable to morphing to social conditions in Britain. These adaptations included a deviation from the dominant mental distress discourse evident in the American website to a dominant metaphysical discourse in the British site that did not include such overt use of language related to mental illness. The British metaphysical discourse was related to the geographical and historical origins of the centre where GHEI was being practiced in Wales. In keeping with research by Fox (2004) into the differences between American and British culture, it also included less talk of finance or of the qualifications and experience of practitioners than the American web materials. In Britain, money talk is taboo and ‘boasting’ of expertise or qualifications is considered impolite (Fox 2004). It is unclear to what extent these cultural differences are being played out.
across the global community of GHEI practitioners, but in this British website at least, a level of cultural adaptation was evident.

On another level, there was a consistency across both websites whereby the portrayal of males as clients was one of absence. Males were positioned in the American website but only as managers and dignitaries. The absence of males as clients in both websites served to position females as emotional beings in need of expert assistance. The role of the practitioner in both websites was one of expert with authoritative knowledge, but within differing fields of expertise.

It can be concluded that whilst some cultural adaptation had taken place, the current subject positioning of clients, practitioners and horses remained the same across both websites; with the practitioners as the experts and clients without voice. Taking into account subject positions as a set of relations in flux, this may be due in part to the genre of the text which included the need to market GHEI through focusing on the expertise of the practitioner. Both websites positioned the horse as a mirror, where it was determined that the mirror as a metaphor has been at the intersection of discourses since ancient times. It continues to serve this function in relation to GHEI.

### 7.3 Implications for GHEI Practice

There are many assumptions inherent in GHEI in all its many guises. Not least is the assumption in the majority of the literature that it is a positive intervention for a range of different people and presenting problems. Quantitative studies reviewed in Chapter Two (section 2.3.1 table 3) showed a degree of positive outcomes for participants taking part in GHEI. Table 35 shows a summary of these outcomes.
Table 35: Insights from this thesis in relation to quantitative studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Year</th>
<th>Summary of Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Klontz, Bivens, Leinart, Klontz (2007)</td>
<td>Significant reduction in psychological distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shambo (2007)</td>
<td>Decrease in depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mann (2002)</td>
<td>Reduction in severity of behavioural and emotional symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trotter (2007)</td>
<td>Decrease in negative social behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aduddell (2006)</td>
<td>Increase in self esteem, decrease in symptoms of depression, aggression and attachment disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner (2005)</td>
<td>Impact on positive discharge status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatty (2005)</td>
<td>Increase in self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shultz, Remick-Barlow, Robbins (2006)</td>
<td>Improvement in symptoms of children who have experienced intra family violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discourse analysis will not provide a definitive answer to support these positive outcomes, but it does provide insightful knowledge based on interpretation. The insights gained from the three studies in this thesis support these quantitative findings, in as much as the horse acting as a sensory and symbolic vehicle, the client centred as the expert, the spatial and relational distancing between client and practitioner, and an indirect approach to change, all point to the ability of GHEI to engage certain clients. Once engaged, there is the potential for a range of positive outcomes to follow.

The spatial and relational distancing, when considered together, provide for further subject positions to be adopted by both clients and practitioners. For example, one of the subject positions surfaced in this thesis was the client as the expert. This is an altogether different subject position to patient. Differing subject positions afford both practitioners and clients access to a wider range of discursive resources thereby enhancing the potential to engage those that may not adopt a prescribed subject position, such as patient in need of treatment.

The intention with this research has been to provide practitioners with an account of the meaning given to GHEI so they can consider some of the underlying conventions to practice. Despite the absence of definitive answers, the insights surfaced in this thesis may provide benefit through the framing of those insights in a practical way. The implications for GHEI practice for both...
practitioners and clients have been summarised in a chart format found in Appendix 11. However, the major insight gained in this thesis in accounting for GHEI practice is the meaning given to the function of the horse in the intervention. For practitioners who are often asked *why horses*, these insights into the function of the horse may have implications for practice.

The function of the horse in GHEI has five key elements that specifically construct its involvement in therapeutic and learning practice:

- The horse functions as an all round sensory experience for the client that includes feelings, touch, smell, and sight, kinaesthetic and auditory senses.

- The horse provides for spatial distancing between the client and the practitioner. That is, the client is at a physical distance from the practitioner whilst they interact with the horses.

- The horse functions as a living breathing metaphor and symbolic vehicle. The use of the horse as a metaphor impacts on the client/practitioner dynamics to relationally distance them through an indirect approach to change.

- The horse functions as a co-therapist that assists the practitioner in taking an alternative subject positioning from expert.

- The horse functions as a resistance vehicle to place GHEI outside of mainstream mental illness services, whilst simultaneously facilitating practitioners to remain allied to an authoritative and credible body of practice.

These five functions of the horse can be equated to the five functions of the discourses as table 36 illustrates.
Table 36: Symbiotic Function of Horses and Dominant Discourses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Discourse</th>
<th>Function of the Discourse</th>
<th>Function of the Horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Positions the client as the expert</td>
<td>The horse functions as a co-therapist that assists the practitioner in taking an alternative subject positioning from expert thereby drawing on alternative discourses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysical</td>
<td>Relationally distances client and practitioner</td>
<td>The horse provides for spatial distancing between the client and the practitioner. That is, the client is at a physical distance from the practitioner whilst they interact with the horses. Spatial distancing impacts on relational distancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Distress</td>
<td>Categorises GHEI</td>
<td>The horse functions as a resistance vehicle to place GHEI outside of mainstream mental illness services, whilst simultaneously facilitating practitioners to remain allied to an authoritative and credible body of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Indirect approach to change</td>
<td>The horse functions as a living breathing metaphor and symbolic vehicle. The use of the horse as a metaphor impacts on the client/practitioner dynamics to relationally distance them through an indirect approach to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Part of a discursive framework based on how we order reality</td>
<td>The horse functions as an all round sensory experience for the client that includes touch, smell, and sight, kinaesthetic and auditory senses. It also surfaces feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36 demonstrates the symbiosis between the macro function of the five dominant discourses surfaced in this thesis and the function of the horse in GHEI practice. This is a ‘centaur’ effect whereby human language and the physical presence of horses are enmeshed.
7.4 Summary of Discussion

Five dominant discourses were surfaced in this thesis. Each of those discourses provided for a different function in the discursive construction of GHEI. There are points where those functions intersect, and there is also a symbiosis between the function of the horse and the function of the discourses.

Together the dominant discourses form a discursive framework based on how we construct and categorise our reality into thinking, feeling and doing with a spiritual essence (Figure 8).

The thinking, or cognitive aspect of the discursive framework, is related to the mental distress discourse that functions to categorise GHEI as an adjunct to the authoritative and privileged mental illness system. In this discourse, the function of the horse is to act as a resistance vehicle to ensure that GHEI is not categorised in its totality within the mental illness system. Notwithstanding, GHEI practitioners can still link to the privilege that mental illness systems are afforded in contemporary society.

The affective, or feeling, part of the framework is construed within the embodied sensory and symbolic discourses that function to explain our sensory experiences of the world and offer an indirect approach to change. In these two discourses, the horse functions as a sensory and symbolic vehicle to facilitate change through being positioned as a living, breathing sensory metaphor.

Behavioural, or doing, is contained within a historical and cultural context whereby the social discourse functions to position the client as the expert. The function of the horse in this discourse is to act as a co-therapist to facilitate the adoption of alternative subject positions by the practitioner. In this way the practitioner can draw on the alternative discursive resources available to them outside of expert and authoritative practitioner.

Finally, spiritual essence is surfaced within the metaphysical discourse which functions to relationally distance the client and the practitioner through the adoption of yet further subject positionings by the practitioner. For the horse
in this discourse, their function is to add a further dynamic to the relational distancing by keeping the client spatially distanced from the practitioner.

It can be concluded that the inclusion of a horse in therapeutic and learning practice is at an intersection between past discourses where the metaphysical, such as spirit and healing, were privileged and contemporary discourses where social normalisation and treatment of mental illness is authoritative. There is a symbiotic relationship between the functions of the equines and the discourses in the social construction of GHEI. This results in a centaur-like enmeshment of human and horse.
 CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

A reflection on methodological choices is followed by a discussion on research limitations and recommendations for future studies.

8 Reflections on Methodology

8.1.1 Social Constructionism

There is a diversity of constructionist approaches, as discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis. These varieties have generally arisen from ontological and epistemological debates, such as the relativism and critical realism divide, where discussions are far from conclusive. So, the key challenge for this research from the outset was in making what was invisible in discourses become visible without stating that it was an absolute reality.

It is therefore stressed, in keeping with the principles of social constructionism, that this research is just one possible construction of GHEI, developed through the lens of my own personal experiences. It has been shaped by subjecting interpretations to critical scrutiny by four doctoral supervisors from different disciplines, presentations at universities and conferences, as well as GHEI practice based meetings. Interpretations have also been weighed against academic literature, but the rich wealth of data obtained and the constructionist perspective negates any total conclusion. As Burr (2008) concludes, social constructionism is in a constant state of debate, therefore any research can only be a snapshot in time. This is what makes social constructionism interesting, as the insights surfaced from the studies in this thesis become open to debate and counter debate.

In the discussion, it was highlighted that each dominant discourse held a differing micro, meso and macro function. The functions of these discourses were interpreted at a layer of visibility beyond analysis of the spoken and transcribed words. Yet, however insightful, or obvious, this visibility might be, there is still the question remaining of what now? This research is not about
changing society, it is about the meaning given to an evolving therapeutic and learning practice, and where the knowledge applied to the construction of GHEI is not neutral. Research undertaken within a social constructionist framework offers space to explore the assumptions underlying the existing knowledge base to illuminate underlying conventions and provide for alternative constructions.

In relation to this research, alternative constructions might be to resist certain subject positionings such as the practitioner as the expert because of the power dynamics and ultimately resistance inherent in that position. It might be to reject certain discourses such as those on risk because they do not afford the client autonomy. It might be to challenge constructions that do not accommodate the extra discursive or those that position the client at risk if they do not participate in GHEI. It might also offer an alternative to practitioners believing they have to engage a client in a close and meaningful relationship, rather than distance themselves both spatially and relationally, in order for the client to attain the changes they want in their lives. It could free practitioners to adapt their practice to fit with specific social conditions. Finally, it might assist practitioners and clients in understanding the role sensory experience and metaphor can play in their guided interactions with horses. In this way, this constructionist research will raise awareness of what previously might not have been known, valued or understood in GHEI.

8.1.2 Discourse Analysis

The original thinking behind this thesis, in terms of the research focus was to undertake an exploration of the social processes involved in GHEI. Yet, it soon became clear that the primary social process involved was the use of language. With this in mind, this research turned to focus on the language used to account for meaning given to GHEI.

The discursive approach used at the outset was outside of a critical discourse analysis stance. The rationale for this was based on the focus of the research, which was on the meaning given to GHEI, rather than power dynamics inherent in practice. However, in the course of the research it became apparent that it
is not possible to interrogate, analyse, interpret, and draw conclusions about GHEI without straying into the critical field. Power impacts on the discursive construction of GHEI in the same way it pervades many aspects of our social lives. On reflection, power was a marked component of GHEI since its inception in the USA around sixty years ago. This is evidenced by notion that humankind can take a relatively simple interaction between human and animal, which has taken place for millennia, and turn it into a global industry.

Alongside a growing awareness of power dynamics in GHEI as this thesis evolved, was a developing understanding of Foucauldian thinking. Foucault began to play a larger part in the construction of this thesis as his concepts became more intelligible. This understanding took time to develop, and will no doubt continue to develop. Foucault’s ideas evolved over his lifetime, whereas this thesis has evolved over only a relatively short time span of five years. Ultimately, this is what is appealing about discourse analysis. The constant insights and myriad of ways of looking at reality means there are many songs still to surface.

8.1.3 Critique of Discourse Analysis

Much of the criticisms of discourse analysis can be applied to qualitative techniques in general. The primary one being lack of scientific rigour. As Mays (1995) brings to mind, to label research as ‘unscientific’ is particularly derogatory in an era where scientific discourse is privileged. The second, but related criticism is that qualitative research is based on subjective bias. The philosophical debate in this thesis has helped to some extent to set this critique in context by arguing that a fundamental component of any research is that it is seen through the lens of a researcher. Researcher subjectivity and bias impacts on all research, whether this is in the research question chosen to explore or the research methodology utilised. In discourse analysis this is generally acknowledged as a fundamental part of the research process.

One of the critiques specific to discourse analysis relates to the previously described issues around adhering to an ontological framework and the subsequent claims that are made about the research (section 3.3.2). This
refers to research from which conclusions are drawn that is not founded in the ontological assumptions underpinning the study. An example of this would be a relativist/critical realist study making generalised conclusions. This is where reflexivity is vital to understanding naturalisation of language and the underlying assumptions of the researcher and how they see beyond these. It has certainly been one of the challenges faced throughout this study.

As a researcher into GHEI I have previously had a varied professional background, but the majority of my working life has involved either working directly in, or on the periphery of health services. As noted in Chapter One, GHEI encompasses many disciplines, not least those with a professional background in equines. My experience with equines has only been as a hobbyist. Therefore, the analysis and subsequent interpretations in this thesis are constructed through that lens. I have not located this work in any one academic discipline, although discourse analysis itself has evolved from social psychology, which could provide a ‘fit’ for GHEI. However, it could equally be argued to fit with eco psychology, education, psychiatry, nursing, social work, ethology, equine studies, or a range of other disciplines. This multi disciplinary approach added to the complexity of trying to ensure a focused approach to the research, yet by locating the research in any one discipline would have led to a narrowing of the interpretations. My background, including my role as a research student in a faculty of Health Sciences, could not be ignored. Therefore, interpretations tend to emanate from theories and research relating to health, including those allied to health. This refers back to subjectivity as well as adherence to an ontological stance.

A further critique of discourse analysis is related to the representation of participants as consciously selecting their discourses. This is the crux of the differences between the Manchester and Loughborough schools where tension exists around issues of personalisation (section 3.7). This again relates to the underlying philosophical assumptions of any given study. The stance taken within this thesis is the social processes involved in the construction of discourses do not take place in isolation. People are both constructed by language, and operators of it.

One of the concerns I have noticed in discourse analysis is the lack of specific detail on how the analysis was actually carried out in the majority of published
studies. Whilst this might relate yet again to the Potter and Wetherell (1987) statement about the intuition involved in analysis (section 3.7.1), unsurprisingly criticisms have been centred on the lack of rigour in the analysis of discourse. Antaki et al (2002) offer a critique of six shortcomings in the analysis of discourse, but with the intention of aiding researchers in avoiding these particular pitfalls. This includes:

- Under analysis through summary
- Under analysis through taking sides
- Under analysis through over quotation
- Circular identification of discourses and mental constructs
- False Survey
- Analysis that consists of spotting features.

Whilst it can not be stated with any certainty these shortcomings did not apply at some point to the analysis within the studies, a fuller appraisal of the research shortcomings takes place later in this chapter.

8.1.4 Strategy for Analysis

It has to be noted that each of the three studies that make up this thesis, whilst employing the same analytical strategy, had a differing emphasis to the analysis. This was related to:

- the genre of text i.e. website, transcribed interviews, and diary entries
- the research question for each study,
- a growing confidence in applying the principles of social constructionism,
- increasing understanding of discourse analysis,
- evolving knowledge in applying the strategy for analysis
- the provision of insights on the discursive construction of GHEI for each subsequent study to refer back to.
It was demonstrated in this thesis that despite disparate analytical emphasis for each study, the same discourses could manifest themselves in alternative texts in diverse ways, and with a separate focus. Adopting the same analytical strategy across the three studies provided a level of rigour and trustworthiness to this research. It also demonstrated the flexibility of the analytical strategy through it being applied to different genres of text, including graphics. In addition, flexibility was demonstrated through the application of the analytical strategy within differing social, historical and cultural contexts, such as that applied to the American website. In this way the analytical strategy provided for an understanding of the conditions under which the different accounts were produced.

To be able to assess rigour in qualitative research it is usual to demonstrate a systematic analysis. In discourse analysis this is very much dependent on being able to articulate what initially feels intuitive, because as a researcher you are part of the discursive world. Fairclough (2003) noted that it is not so much the words we use but how we classify things that are a key element of discourse analysis. For example the parallels noted between the equine industry and mental health systems could have led practitioners to believe that GHEI was natural or intuitive (section 5.3.2 table 19). It may be that the two systems are so similarly classified that they feel familiar, comfortable, or natural. Using this as an example, the strategy for analysis helped with thinking outside of these familiar or natural categorisations by ‘permitting’ interpretation of the data, rather than simply describing or analysing it.

In the analysis there was a challenge between presenting findings in relation to description, analysis, and interpretation. Too much data, as in the practitioner study, led to a proportion of the findings being descriptive rather than analytical or interpretative. The client study, whilst having only one diary, actually provided for a deeper level of analysis and interpretation, and thus limited description. The complex relationship between description, analysis, and interpretation can be highlighted through the use of a mathematical metaphor to define the subtle differences. Description is the actual numbers involved such as 3, 3, 4, and 5. Analysis is the process of adding, subtracting, dividing or multiplying, whilst interpretation is the process of calculating and providing a result. Thus the four hypothetical numbers above give meaning in different ways according to how they are described (3, 3, 4, 5, or 33, 45 or
analysed (3+3+4+5 or 3X3-4 X5) and the subsequent numerical interpretation placed on those calculations. To further illustrate with an example from this research, 10 practitioners took part in the practitioner study of which 9 had early ongoing contact with horses (descriptive), those practitioners used three dominant discourses (analytical) and the functions of those discourses was to authenticate, normalise, and provide a philosophical basis to practice (interpretative).

It is not enough to show what constitutes the data (descriptive) or what dominant discourses are present (analytical) but also how those discourses are constituted and what is included and excluded (interpretative). This is why I concur with Ballinger and Cheek (2006) with regards to the use of the term insights rather than findings. Discourses create a reality, rather than finding or discovering one. Mental illness discourse for example is interpreted in this thesis as creating a reality of dis-ease and deficit, whereas social discourse is interpreted as creating a reality where cultural aspects of society are normalised. These interpretations are insights into the discursive resources available, and these insights come about from the subject positioning of the researcher.

It is not possible to prove, in the positivist sense, that an interpretation of a text is a ‘truth’. Although, it is possible to say that texts do not support endless interpretations because there are boundaries around what a researcher can actually do with the data (Cameron 2001). So, the text relating to mental illness in the practitioner study could not be interpreted as having a function that did not relate in some way to mental health, illness, and distress and how it has been socially constructed. The key is in the researcher being able to pay close attention to the text and then providing a convincing analysis and interpretation.

One of the discursive questions promoted by Ballinger and Cheek (2006 p.213) is where does the researcher position themselves in this world. Whilst this question was not applied to each separate study in this thesis, it is worth reflecting on this question at this point. I positioned myself at the periphery of all three studies as a professional with over 38 years eclectic practice in mental health, accident and emergency nursing, as a general midwife with a specialist interest in substance misuse, as an adolescent therapist in a child and
adolescent mental health unit, as an advisor on adolescent health to the Home Office, and finally as a chief executive of a voluntary organisation involved in the design and delivery of social projects. I also positioned myself as someone trained to a basic level in GHEI, but not practising at the time of the research. My positioning also included constructing myself as someone who has been involved with horses as a hobbyist.

My researcher positioning could be viewed from three concentric perspectives. I was on the outside of the circle in all my professional constructions. Positioned next to me were the horses. Finally, it was challenging to know who the centre position was occupied by. At times it was occupied by the practitioners, client, and the establishments relating to the websites, whilst simultaneously being occupied by the discourses identified at the outset in the practitioner study that were pulled through this thesis like a golden thread. In this contesting scenario, it was often unclear if human agency took precedence over the discursive constructions, or the discourses themselves were the central focus of the study. This multiple positioning resulted in personal tension between a belief in valuing and respecting the participants as individuals and constructing them only as the sum total of their discourses. Whilst I have endeavoured to position myself in the worlds surfaced in these studies as a researcher on the periphery with the discourses as central to the research, it has not always been possible to see only through that lens.

Constructing new use of language, such as that combining horses and humans in therapeutic and learning work, may create new humankinds; however it is imperative that the iatrogenic effects of language use do not make discursive constructions of GHEI devoid of human agency. Academics, practitioners, and clients do have a degree of agency in selecting or rejecting discursive resources and that includes accepting or rejecting the interpretations and insights put forward in this thesis.
8.2 Rigour and Quality in Discourse Studies

Judging the rigour of a discursive study, such as this, requires four considerations according to Ballinger (2006). The first of these considerations is **coherence**. Ballinger (2006) refers to coherence as a matching of the research aim with the philosophical approach. The ontological stance for this study has been stated as critical realism. That is, it stops just marginally short of a relativist stance by focusing on the construction of *social* realities. The constructionist assumptions underlying the research have been related to the research aim which is to provide an account of how GHEI is discursively constructed. It is also acknowledged in this research that interpretations are undertaken through the lens of the researcher whose beliefs about GHEI and biographical details have been exposed to ensure an understanding that the research has been co-constructed.

The second consideration requires evidence of a **systematic research process**. This is similar in some ways to the auditability process suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) for assuring rigour. Auditability is demonstrated in this study through ensuring clarity and precision in detailing the steps that were taken to ask questions, collect data and analyse the material. In this way a study could be replicated on the basis of the methodology outlined (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Yet, Ballinger (2006) draws short of suggesting the same conclusions would be drawn if the research process was audited. A constructionist stance acknowledges data is co-constructed between participants and researcher. Thus a different researcher and different participants would co-construct a different account. It also takes into account the research process. Hence, within each of the three studies in this thesis, the different research processes that took place with each piece of research were outlined.

The third consideration is that of a **convincing and relevant interpretation**. Ballinger (2006) refers to this as a recognition the research contributes significantly to, in this case, the field of GHEI. She suggests testing can be
undertaken through conferences, presentations as well as debriefing with supervisors and peers. Chapter One of this thesis detailed what has taken place so far in relation to testing which includes presentations to research peers, supervisors, academic professionals, as well as GHEI practitioners. One of the struggles has been how to explain both GHEI and discourse analysis as a method of research in a succinct and informative way.

A discussion on the findings from the practitioner study with a group of four practitioners who had participated in the research led to changes being made to one participant’s practice. They reported being ‘freed up’ from feeling they had to adhere to what they saw as GHEI aligned to ‘rigid’ mental health practice to adopt more of a metaphysical approach. For this practitioner at least the interpretation of the findings was convincing and relevant. However, this did raise some ethical issues in relation to power dynamics between researchers and researched. It seems the researcher position was perceived as dominant by virtue of the authoritative knowledge vested in academia, which was authoritative enough for a practitioner to actually change their practice. The dichotomy here is that technical language, or the language with all the power, whilst providing a convincing and relevant interpretation also holds the potential to reconstruct hierarchical processes.

The fourth and final consideration detailed by Ballinger (2006) is based on the role of the researcher being consistent with the course of the research. As discussed in this chapter, the researcher is an important part of the research process. According to Denzin (1989) interpretive research begins and ends with the biography of the researcher. I have detailed a short career history and relevant aspects of self along with my assumptions and beliefs about GHEI (Appendix 1). The challenge in this has been where I sat on the emic or etic continuum as whilst trained in GHEI, I did not practice for the period of the research other than training in GHEI as part of a travel scholarship. This can be returned to for more detail in the practitioner study (Chapter Four).
8.2.1 Appraisal of this Research

There is no standardised methodology, or even one approach to discourse analysis, by which to appraise rigour and trustworthiness. Much of the work on measuring rigour has assumptions based on positivism, such as a single truth, and where there is no recognition there can be differing constructions of social reality.

For example, this thesis has not used triangulation to ascertain a single point of truth. Instead it has adopted the pebble in the pond approach. This has involved a primary research question leading to subsidiary research questions for each of the three studies. Ultimately, the insights gained from asking the subsidiary questions have fed back into a revised knowledge base. To Silverman (2001) the first goal of research is valid knowledge. Therefore, this thesis will be appraised according to the valid knowledge it can provide to the field of GHEI. It is also hoped this research will contribute in some small way to the much wider knowledge base of discourse analysis.

Notwithstanding, a systematic appraisal of this research is required. So, ten criteria which have been used by the British Sociological Association for evaluating qualitative research (Silverman 2001: p.222), are replicated in table 37 on the following page. These criteria are related to the research for this thesis alongside the four considerations detailed by Ballinger (2006).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for evaluating research</th>
<th>Evaluation of this thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are the methods of research appropriate to the nature of the question being asked?</td>
<td>The overall research question is focused on the discursive construction of GHEI. The research is framed in social constructionism and discourse analysis which is relevant to the nature of the research question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the research aim coherent with the philosophical approach? (Ballinger 2006)</td>
<td>The philosophical approach for this research focuses on the discursive construction of social realities. This relates to the research aim, which is to provide an account of how GHEI is discursively constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the connection to an existing body of knowledge or theory clear?</td>
<td>The research is connected to social constructionism and discourse analysis. The application of these bodies of knowledge to the research has evolved as the relevant studies have unfolded.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Whilst embedded in the work of Burr (2008), Gergen (1985, 1996, 2009), Parker (1992, 1999), and Ballinger and Cheek (2006), all of which have an underlying influence of Foucault, this thesis brings in the work of other influential thinkers across an eclectic range of academic literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are there clear accounts of the criteria used for the selection of cases for study, and of the data collection and analysis?</td>
<td>Each of the three studies provides an account of the rationale for the study, the methods used including the selection of cases for study. The method of data collection and analysis was clarified in each study and reflected on in the conclusions of each piece of research. Reflections on the overall methodology have been provided in the final chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the sensitivity of the methods match the needs of the research question?</td>
<td>Sensitivity has been demonstrated in this thesis by relating the overall research question to each subsequent study relevant to this thesis. This is the pebble in the pond approach where each research question for each study feeds back into the predominant research question. The methods in each of the three studies have been sensitively selected to address each specific research study question.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity to diversity in the sample size was not directly addressed in relation to race, ability, sexuality or religion. The sample populations were not large enough to account for this level of diversity. However, with the increasing delivery of GHEI in the UK, this would be an interesting area for further research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Was the data collection and record-keeping systematic?</td>
<td>Discourse analysis is an iterative process yet the writing of a thesis is constructed as a linear process. Therefore there are acknowledged challenges in ensuring data collection and record keeping are systematically portrayed. One example of systematic portrayal of record keeping can be found in the tables in the Literature Review relating to the critique of each available study on GHEI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is reference made to accepted procedures for analysis?</td>
<td>The strategy for analysis across all studies was clarified at the outset of the research and is primarily based on credible work by Ballinger and Cheek (2006). Their work has been influenced by Parker (1992) who was influenced by Foucault. Reflections on the strategy for analysis have been provided in the final chapter (section 7.3.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. How systematic is the analysis?</td>
<td>The strategy for analysis provided for a systematic approach to each of the three studies in this thesis. This systematic approach was greatly enhanced through the provision of a boundaried framework to frame the insights and ensure each study was framed in the same systematic way. This framing also enabled the final analysis across all three studies to be more systematic than otherwise would have been possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there evidence of a systematic research process? (Ballinger 2006)</td>
<td>The methodology and research process for each study has been outlined and could be replicated on that basis. However, there is no prior assumption that the same interpretations or insights would be surfaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is there adequate discussion of how themes, concepts and categories are derived from the data</td>
<td>The intention of discourse analysis is not to develop themes but to surface discourses. Each of the three studies provided a rationale for the surfacing of discourses which included the use of technological language, the frequency of use, and the importance given to the discourse in the overall text. The work of Parker (1992) was discussed in the methodology chapter which defined discourse and the seven criteria required to ascertain a discursive resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is there adequate discussion of the evidence for and against the researcher’s arguments</td>
<td>One of the challenges in discourse analysis is to achieve consistency in epistemological and ontological assumptions. The main argument in this thesis is formed on the basis of ontological assumptions inherent in social constructionism and the use of language to construct reality. Each of the studies has drawn on a variety of different literature and theories to support the main arguments. One example of this is the literature on subject positioning and agency in relation to the client study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the role of the researcher consistent with the course of the research? (Ballinger 2006)</td>
<td>The positioning of the researcher in the research commenced with some biographical details in the Introduction chapter and concluded in the final chapter with an analysis of the challenges involved in adopting one fixed researcher positioning in the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is there a clear distinction made between the data and its interpretation?</td>
<td>A study involving discourse analysis generates interpretative claims yet one critique of discourse analysis is founded on its under or over interpretation of data (Antaki et al. 2007). Whilst a numerical metaphor has been applied in this thesis to clarify the distinction between data description, analysis and its interpretation, the data in this thesis has not been left to speak for itself in order to avoid any critique of over and under applying interpretation. There has been a close engagement with the texts, with reflexivity playing a large part in helping to surface what was previously considered invisible. Testing of interpretations has been undertaken through contact with four doctoral supervisors, presentations at Universities and conferences, and feedback from GHEI practice based groups. Further testing will take place through publications and ongoing public dissemination of the research.</td>
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</table>

Based on Silverman (2001) and Ballinger (2006)
Potter (1996) stipulates that the only way to learn discourse analysis is by doing it. He concludes that discourse analysis is time consuming, hard work, and frustrating, yet, it can help with the development of analytical skills. The analytical skills required for undertaking a discursive study have been demonstrated as positively evolving throughout the course of this thesis.

8.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

One of the key limitations of this research for some GHEI practitioners will be in what they perceive to be the lack of credible outcomes they can cite in their funding applications. For those practitioners, the importance of this research lies not in its ability to report on outcomes that are pre determined by professional theoretical frames, but in its ability to explore further into the realms of GHEI. To make visible what otherwise might remain invisible and to reflect on the way language use cloaks assumptions that frame GHEI. For example, the need to produce positivist research to attract funding has resulted in no studies to date accounting for the meaning given to GHEI by practitioners and clients alike. Yet, this research shows there is meaning to be given to GHEI such as the functions of the horses and discourses that reconstitute the client/practitioner relationship.

To question and interpret practice through language leads us to a deeper understanding of the underlying processes involved in GHEI. An understanding of how it is evolving provides the ability to positively influence that construction in the longer term. For example, do practitioners want the perceived authority of aligning GHEI with mental health services, in which case outcome based studies are imperative in informing an evidence base, or do they want to offer something outside of the current institutional systems. The inclusion of metaphysical discourses by practitioners suggests they may be seeking something outside of a current practice that does not provide for metaphysical expression. However, the practical need to finance practice may mean it is essential to provide it with an authoritative discourse.
However, there has to be recognition that as GHEI continues to evolve, that the nature of discourses and language use means it will evolve and develop its own hierarchical and institutional system. This is due to human propensity to categorise and re-categorise.

One key limitation of this research that has to be acknowledged is that this thesis has in some ways replicated what is happening in the general literature on GHEI. That is, many practitioner voices involved in the construction of GHEI, and a paucity of the voices of those individuals who participate as clients. Whilst privileging the discourse of embodied knowledge and the client as the expert, there is a paradox in only one client voice in this thesis. This paradox replicates the lack of client voices across a range of service provision such as mental illness and social care. Notwithstanding, this thesis has been a quest for discursive meaning and the data has provided fruitful and valuable insights into the discursive construction of GHEI.

8.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The paucity of client voices in the existing body of research into GHEI has been noted. The client in this thesis provided valuable insights into GHEI in her account of her experiences, but many more voices of clients are required in order to enhance understanding of practice. As GHEI appears to be evolving, for some practitioners at least, with the client positioned as the expert in embodied knowledge, there is the hope this positioning will eventually expand to include ‘expert in researching embodied knowledge’. For example, some seminal authors are now pushing back boundaries between the subject positions of practitioner, client, and researcher (Grant, 2009, Short, Grant and Clarke 2007). The types of insights provided by individuals who can adopt all these subject positionings would provide valuable knowledge in relation to GHEI practice. (Research question: what does positioning the client as the expert mean for clients of GHEI?)

Meaning is not a fixed entity therefore the replication of this research over time, with different social and cultural groups, and including the use of more genres of language use such as supplementary language systems (i.e.
Makaton), would provide further insights into the changing of the meaning given to GHEI as it continues to evolve. (Research question: how does the discursive construction of GHEI change over a stated period of time?)

Further in depth work specific to the use of metaphor and symbol would greatly enhance the meaning given to discursive accounts of GHEI. This would benefit from the involvement of individuals who are on the autistic spectrum such as those with a diagnosis of pervasive development disorder or Asperger’s syndrome. The rationale for including this particular group of individuals is to enhance understanding of how metaphor is processed and how it constructs reality. Practitioners such as Levinson (2009) in Hawaii have set up GHEI practice to work with children who are on the autistic spectrum, although the meaning given to metaphorical language for this group of individuals is by no means clear (Grandin and Johnson 2006). Research into metaphor use would also benefit from the inclusion of other animals in guided interactions to determine the function of a specific species in developing a metaphorical landscape. For example pigs instead of horses. (Research question: what is the discursive construction of Guided Human Porcine Interactions?)

Research is recommended in relation to the metaphor of the horse is a mirror. To understand more about how horses reportedly mirror human behaviour and feelings it is worth turning to the field of micro-expressions. It was documented in the website study that both in the USA and the UK the horse was perceived as a mirror and this was also talked about in the practitioner study. Horses were seen to accurately reflect human emotions and to parallel these back not only to the client, but to the practitioner as well. Ekman and Friesen (2003) have for over twenty years researched facial expression and body movement. They highlight the complexity of translating human facial expressions whereby fleeting micro-expressions may be unconsciously observed but not necessarily translated. Horses, by their very nature of observing, what to the human eye appear to be minute bodily movements in other horses; will react to each other accordingly. Therefore, one hypothesis arising from this thesis is that horses ‘read’ human micro expressions and react accordingly. One famous case involved a horse called Clever Hans who could read the body language of his trainer, despite no apparent movement or cues being observed in the trainer by other humans (Pfungst 1911). As in the
case of Clever Hans, the client may provide clues or expressions that a practitioner may not see or translate accordingly but which the horse will observe, translate, and react. In other words they will mirror the human they are interacting with. Another reason why practitioners may describe GHEI as ‘easier’. *(Research question: are horses able to read and mirror human micro expressions?)*

As to be expected from a newly evolving practice, there are numerous aspects of GHEI that would benefit from further research, not least outcome based studies. However, there is a paradox in suggesting positivist research because of the ontological and epistemological stance taken in this thesis. It has not been the intention of this research to confine research to social construction and the meaning given to discursive accounts alone. This research highlighted equine involvement in restructuring the practitioner client relationship. A comparison study centred on the relationship between client and practitioner in GHEI and office based therapy would provide valuable knowledge. *(Research question: how does GHEI impact on the client/practitioner relationship in comparison to office based therapy?)*

### 8.5 Summary of Thesis

A guided human equine interaction (GHEI) is a term that covers a range of interactions between humans and horses that include the involvement of a GHEI practitioner from professional backgrounds such as social work or an equine specialism. Whilst the intention is to facilitate emotional or social development in humans, there is paucity of research to evidence the assumptions inherent in practice. Little is known about the underlying social processes involved, or the meanings participants give to GHEI. Despite this, practice is rapidly expanding in the UK. The purpose of this research has been to account for the meaning given to the escalating inclusion of horses in therapeutic and learning practice by asking how GHEI is discursively constructed.

An underlying principle in this thesis has been that discourses employed to account for equine involvement in therapy and learning construct practice.
Language samples were therefore obtained from interviews with ten practitioners of GHEI, two websites marketing GHEI, and from the personal experience of one client, as realised through her diary entries. The data thus obtained were interrogated according to an analytical strategy based on work by Ballinger and Cheek (2006).

Five dominant discourses were surfaced across three studies in this thesis. Each of those discourses provided for a different function in the discursive construction of GHEI. There are points where those functions intersect with each other, and there is also a symbiotic relationship between the function of the horse and the function of the discourses. Together the dominant discourses form a discursive framework that provides an account for the meaning given to GHEI based on how we construct and categorise our reality into the cognitive, affective and behavioural. GHEI adds a further dimension to this reality based on spiritual constructions.

The cognitive, or thinking aspect of the discursive framework relates to mental distress discourse which functions to categorise GHEI as an adjunct to the authoritative and privileged mental illness system. In this discourse, the function of the horse is to act as a resistance vehicle to ensure that GHEI is not categorised in its totality as a mental illness intervention.

The affective, or feeling, part of the framework is construed within embodied sensory and symbolic discourses that explain our sensory experiences of the world and offer an indirect approach to change. In these two discourses the horse functions as a sensory and symbolic vehicle to facilitate change through being positioned as a living, breathing sensory metaphor.

Behavioural, or doing, is contained within a historical and cultural context whereby the social discourse functions to position the client as the expert. The function of the horse in this discourse is to act as a co-therapist to facilitate the adoption of alternative subject positions by the practitioner. In this way the practitioner can draw on a range of discursive resources wider than that of expert and authoritative practitioner.
Finally, spiritual essence is surfaced through the metaphysical discourse. This functions to relationally distance the client and practitioner through both being able to adopt yet further subject positioning. The function of the horse in this discourse is to add a further dynamic to the relational distancing by keeping the client and practitioner spatially, distanced from each other.

It can be concluded that the inclusion of a horse in therapeutic and learning practice is at an intersection between past discourses where the metaphysical, such as spirit and healing, were privileged and contemporary discourses where social normalisation and treatment of mental illness is authoritative. There is a symbiotic relationship between the functions of the equines and the discourses in the social construction of GHEI which results in a centaur-like enmeshment of human and horse.

GHEI may help construct new humankinds, new ways of being, where humans are not distinct from the natural and the inevitable and embodied knowledge is privileged. GHEI can be about learning once again to reconnect with our past discourses, where we are not separated through language use. When we connect with the herd through being rather than doing, we are reconnecting with ourselves, with others, and with the wider universe.
Appendix 1: Examples from Research Diaries

Extract from reflective diary – My beliefs about GHEI - June 2006

‘I commenced psychiatric nurse training in 1974 when it was the custom for ‘patients’ to be incarcerated for long periods of time in a psychiatric institution. As a nurse back then I spent much of my time outdoors with patients, accompanying them on walks in the countryside, helping them in the orchards, or gardening. As time went on, treatment modes became focused on talking therapies and medication which either took place inside buildings or left an individual with side effects that negated an outdoor life. For example, chlorpromazine was the drug of choice then which resulted in serious reaction to sunlight. Fast forwarding three decades, my own experiences of GHEI provided me with rapid insight into patterns of thinking and behaviour in my life. An insight that I do not believe many years of counselling would have achieved, but which was achieved in just one session of GHEI in the client role. If I were to practice GHEI, as opposed to researching it, it would be because I could combine my enjoyment of horses with being outdoors whilst engaging in a talking therapy with participants. Thus, there would be a self serving element to my practice. Although I believe GHEI offers an opportunity for clients to combine being outdoors and engaging with the natural world, with a talking therapy, I am uncertain what social processes or assumptions are involved in this.

Extract from reflective diary – Constructionism - January 2007

‘The journey into social constructionism is like one of those pictures made up of dots where if you stare long enough and hard enough eventually a picture will emerge. I have been staring for weeks and occasionally the dots blur into something that might be faintly recognisable but they quickly fade again and I am left with my eyes and head hurting and with no desire to try again. I have come to slowly realise I have been seeking a complete picture. My brain desired to make sense of something that appeared scrambled. I craved a clearly defined outline, a recognisable shape and a comforting realisation. A dot-to-dot image, which I could join up with very little effort, and spend some happy hours simply colouring in. I have abandoned that line of thinking and I am now ready to adopt a foundation, a solid conceptual base, which will guide my actions throughout the research and not just for the data collection and analysis. What is emerging is an eclectic framework taken from elements of different authors on social constructionism but mainly focusing on the work of Burr which is at least understandable – this is my own uniquely constructed picture that will underpin the very essence of the research. Within social constructionism subjectivity is encouraged.

Extract from reflective diary – Pilot Interview - January 2007

Today I did my first pilot interview, I found myself completely entering therapist mode. This included the body language, the tone of voice, and the sense of curiosity about the underlying meanings, hypothesizing, reflecting, paraphrasing, and picking up on metaphor use.

I now find myself completely curious as to the differentiation between researcher using an in depth interview technique designed specifically to obtain rich and detailed information about a topic and a therapist attempting to facilitate a client to give voice to their feelings and experiences. Could this difference be in terms of trying to
understand a topic rather than a person, yet how can one understand a topic that involves the person without attempting to understand the person?

During the interview I found I had to keep repeating the topic heading to myself in order to avoid going off tract. The participant discussed their own personal experiences of involving horses as part of their own treatment programme for addiction – very valid and powerful, yet not for inclusion in this study.

Extract from reflective diary – Second Pilot Interview - February 2007

Having made sure the tape equipment was fully functional by experimenting with extremely bored family members, I still found myself quite anxious that the equipment would function adequately during the second pilot interview. I spent some time setting up the recording machine to ensure it was placed in the optimum position, shouting ‘testing one to three’ from all corners of the room. When the participant was actually present I found myself initially shouting in the direction of the tape and trying to ensure out of the corner of my eye that I could see it running which was distracting me from actually concentrating on what the participant was saying. Part way during the course of the interview I became quite anxious that the tape might have run out and was no longer recording.

Feedback from the participant said she could not tell I was distracted as she was enjoying telling her story – however I did not feel she had my full attention.

Once the interview was complete I played back the initial part of the interview and all appeared to be well, so imagine my horror when I got back home ready to transcribe the data only to discover the sound recording was so poor that it took around five hours of playing the tape over and over to get enough clarity to transcribe. Even then it had numerous gaps where words could not quite be made out.

I can only imagine that something happened to the tape during the flight back home. Next time I shall use two recording systems!

Extract from reflective diary – Radical Constructionism (Constructivism)- February 2007

In the documentary What the Bleep Do We Know (2005) the perspective is put forward that all of reality is created from within our selves. This interesting account offers a compelling argument based on our current knowledge of quantum physics. There is now an understanding that only what the mind can see is our own individual reality and that much of what we could see, we just do not record mentally. Therefore our reality is constructed from within and not from without. An interesting case illustrates this:

When ships arrived in the Caribbean for the first time, the indigenous people looking out to sea could not see them. They could see the ripples in the water surrounding the ships, but because they had no actual perception of a ship, having not seen one before, they could not visually or mentally record this large material object. The Shaman had
to meditate on the ripples for days until the ships appeared in his visual field. He then
revealed this image to the rest of the people who, because they trusted him, could finally
observe the ships as well.

Ellis Hill (2007) suggests one method for understanding reality is to imagine a box,
which must be akin to a tardis as it can take any size object. What you can see, pick up,
and put in the box is ‘real’. For example, a ship could go in the box, but an emotion
could not. However, the indigenous people of the Carib would not have been able to
see these ships. Did this make the ships any less real? Perhaps the answer lies
somewhere in an individual’s construction of reality. Thus, the ships were part of the
reality of the men on the ships and to the Shaman after some days, but not at first to the
people. This supports the premise of multiple realities that is ongoing and open to
change. Does radical constructionism amount to radical relativism amount to
constructivism?

Extract from reflective diary – Interviews - July 2007

What wonderful discussions flow from the interviews following the ending of the
recording when practitioners appear to feel free to ask questions? In this way the
conversation becomes more ‘natural’ in terms of interaction and a sharing of ideas and
experiences rather than a researcher stance of neutrality. Some practitioners seem to
feel freer to express their personal ideas about spirituality, the nature of horses, and
what perhaps this work can offer, when they are not being recorded. The bouncing of
ideas between the researcher and the participant gives an impression that the rapport
appeared to move to another level as we shared each other’s perceptions, experiences,
and a mutual respect for the horses involved in this work. This sharing in itself is
probably the key to furthering rapport. Three of the participating practitioners
specifically mentioned the horses’ eyes as being of particular significance in this
context.

Extract from reflective diary – Therapeutic Metaphor – December 2008

If a client says they feel they are ‘letting the side down’. The therapist could take this
expression and work with it in different ways according to their therapeutic model of
practice. For example a humanistic therapist may ask ‘how do you feel about letting
the side down?’

A therapist that adopts a Grovian Metaphor approach would use Symbolic Modelling to
ascertain the symbols contained within the client given metaphor. They would
determine the attributes of the ‘side’ through clean language questioning such as what
kind of side is it? What is the side made of? They would also facilitate discovery of the
location of the side as well as the sequence of events such as how did the side get there,
and when that happened, what happened next? The fundamental principle of Symbolic
Modelling is for the clients to discover their metaphorical landscape and thus any
repeating patterns of behaviour. The therapist does not try to interpret the metaphor.

Interestingly, it is my experience that clients may often try and interpret the situation
and not stick with a self generated unconscious metaphor i.e. what kind of side is side?
‘Well, I was pulled across the arena by the horse’. However, this does not appear to be
the case in consciously expressed metaphors.
Appendix 2: Ethical Approval for Practitioner and Client Studies
Practitioner Study – Ethics Number PO6-07-03

Risk Management/ Issues Log

An Exploration of Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning

Interviews with practitioners.

Practitioner is defined as an individual who is a horse specialist, a teacher, complimentary specialist, a mental health therapist, social worker, or an activity provider who has undergone a specific course of training in Equine Assisted Therapy or Learning, or they have more than three years experience of working in the field, and who is a member of one or more of the following:

- Equine Assisted growth and learning Association
- Etain Equestrian
- Equine Assisted Therapy (UK) web forum

Location

Practitioners are situated at various locations across the United Kingdom.

Appendix

1 Animal Ethical Guidelines (Turner 1996)
2 Ethical Guidelines for Practice (EAGLA 2006)
3 Help line Contacts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk/Issue</th>
<th>(H, M, L)</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Action required</th>
<th>Control measures to further reduce risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant appears unwell</td>
<td>H H M</td>
<td>Ground rules established at outset of research with participant to include details of withdrawing participation</td>
<td>List of helpline numbers to be established (Appendix C)</td>
<td>List of support/help line numbers to be provided to all participants</td>
<td>Participant asked at outset of interview if they can provide a contact number should assistance be required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe guarding participants</td>
<td>H H L</td>
<td>The researcher is a qualified nurse, midwife, adolescent health specialist and therapist</td>
<td>The researcher is a qualified Basic Expedition Leader with the Sports Council which has a focus on health and safety</td>
<td>The researcher has undergone a training programme for interviewing, (National Centre for Social Research)</td>
<td>The researcher has been police checked through the Criminal Records Bureau;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing disclosure by participant during interview</td>
<td>M M L</td>
<td>Support and help line numbers to be distributed as a matter of course to each participant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support and help line sheet developed (appendix 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant discloses unsafe practice or practice giving rise to concern</td>
<td>H H L</td>
<td>Ethical Guidelines for EAGALA provide framework for practice (Appendix B)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns re unsafe practice raised with Etain Equestrian, EAP and EAGLA; Ethical Guidelines for use of animals in therapy to provide a guideline for practice (appendix A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for accident loss or injury through researcher lone working</td>
<td>M H L</td>
<td>Researcher is a qualified trainer on personal safety for the Suzy Lamplugh Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher will adhere to the University of Southampton policy on Lone Working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Practitioners who are working, as an Equine Assisted Therapist in the NHS will be not be recruited*
Ethical Guidelines (Based on animal human interaction guidelines developed by Turner 1996)

1. Reverence for life and dignity for all life forms should be adhered to
2. Suffering is to be minimised. No living being shall be subjected to unnecessary suffering
3. Innocent inequality is to be balanced out
4. Each living being has the same basic right to live and develop
5. Fair distribution of burdens and pleasures
6. Consideration of the interests of all life forms
7. Humans carry responsible trusteeship
8. Humans take responsibility for their actions
9. Therapy/service animals are only to be considered where other forms of therapy/assistance have failed or where there is a particular reason for using such animals (e.g. their socialising effects, a special relationship of the patient or disabled person to the companion animals, cost effectiveness)
10. Only domesticated animals which have been trained using techniques of positive reinforcement and which have been, and will continue to be properly housed and cared for (responsible trusteeship)
11. Safeguards to prevent adverse effects of working are in place (e.g. stress prevention measures, suitable technical equipment, etc)
12. In human-animal research, the well being of control group members is not jeopardised by ceasing or denying them access to an already effective therapy
13. If we cannot show additional benefits of animal based therapy over those already available, or special benefits to specific groups, we have no business using animals in the first place
14. Ethical considerations in ceasing a programme after data collection must be considered
15. Continual re-evaluation of the ethical issues in human-animal research
Ethical Guidelines for Practitioners (EAGLA 2005)

1. The EAGLA associate will provide the highest quality of service and care in supporting and assisting clients in personal growth and learning

2. The EAGLA associate will respect and honour the value and dignity of all human beings and protect the safety, welfare, and best interest of the client

3. The EAGLA associate will always consider physical and emotional safety concerns with all clients. This includes safety utilizing horses and the maintenance of a safe facility. Therapeutic approaches are to be implemented in a respectful manner, never abusing power through sexual or inappropriate relationships with clients, while respecting the privacy and rights of confidentiality of all clients.

4. The EAGLA associate will continually evaluate the progress of clients and will promptly refer them to other professional services if and when this is in the best interest of the client

5. The EAGLA associate will treat other associates and professionals courteously and respect their views, ideas, and opinions

6. The EAGLA associate will share information, experiences, and ideas that will benefit, strengthen and improve the effectiveness of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

7. The EAGLA associate will regularly evaluate his/her own professional strengths and limitations and will seek to improve self and profession through ongoing education and training

8. The EAGLA associate will follow all laws and guidelines pertaining to the scope of his/her practice and limitations of business

9. The EAGLA associate should not participate in, condone to be associated with dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation

10. The EAGLA associate will maintain the highest standards of professional integrity
Support and Help lines

Frank (substance misuse) - 0800776600

Mind - adult mental health and emotional wellbeing - 08457660163

Childline  www.childline.org.uk

RSPCA 0870 5555 999 – www.rspca.org.uk

National Equine Welfare Council  www.newc.co.uk

Blue Cross  www.bluecross.org.uk
Appendix 3: Letters of Collaboration
Appendix 4: Research Governance and Professional Indemnity
Appendix 5: Information Leaflet and Consent Form for the Practitioner Study

University of Southampton
School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences

Ethics Reference Number P06-07-03

Practitioner Information Sheet Version 1 June 06
An Exploration of Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper insight into the experiences and perceptions of practitioners of Equine Assisted Therapy and Equine Assisted Learning.

Why have I been chosen?

As a practitioner you have been invited to take part because you are a member of one or more of the following organisations:

- Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGLA),
- Etain Equestrian (Etain),
- Equine Assisted Therapy Forum (EAT Forum)

We are hoping that fifteen practitioners will talk in depth about their experiences and perceptions of the use of horses in therapy and learning.

We are also talking to clients who have experienced Equine Assisted Therapy about their experiences and perceptions.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

As a practitioner, a decision not to take part, or a decision to withdraw at any time, will not affect your association with EAGLA, Etain or the EAT Forum.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

The study involves the researcher asking you some questions about your experiences of therapy or facilitated learning with horses, as well as your views on how you feel this type of interactions may, or may not, benefit people.

The interview can take place at a time and place convenient to you. It will take about an hour and will be tape recorded with your permission.

**What do I have to do?**

You will meet with the researcher at a time and place convenient to you.

The researcher will ask you some questions about your experiences and thoughts on the use of horses as part of an interaction to help people.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

You will have to spend an hour of your time talking to the researcher about your experiences and views on the use of horses in therapy and/or learning. There is a slight possibility you could become upset. If this does happen, or you become concerned, you can stop the interview at any time.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

It is not intended there are going to be direct benefits to you from taking part in the study, however, taking part may further your understanding of the processes that take place during your horse sessions.

The information we get from the study may help other practitioners, as well as people taking part in sessions, in the future.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you have a complaint about the study, or the researcher, then you can contact Dr. Caroline Ellis-Hill at the University of Southampton (cseh@soton.ac.uk or phone 02380595065).

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly anonymised. All information about you will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Audiotapes will be kept in a locked drawer in a secure
environment. Only the researcher and research supervisors will have access to the information.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research will be used for a Doctor of Philosophy thesis. Any publications arising from the research will be peer reviewed. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Nor will you be identified through any research details presented at conferences.

If you would like a copy of any report or publication then please contact the researcher on kim@soton.ac.uk.

Who is organising the research?

The research is being organised through the University of Southampton School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences. The primary researcher is Kim Brown who is a PhD student. Supervisors of the research are: Dr. Caroline Ellis-Hill, Dr Paula Kersten, and Dr Anne McBride.

Who has reviewed the study?

The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences has reviewed the study.

Further information

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. If you require further information on the study, or would like to discuss the study in more detail then please contact Kim Brown on kim@holecottage.plus.com or telephone/text 0777 9999945

If you agree to take part in this study you will be given a copy of this information sheet and signed consent form to keep.

(vs 1 6/06)
Ethics Reference Number  P06-07-03
Practitioner Consent Form
An Exploration of Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning

Participant No________________________

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (dated June 2006 version 1) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected

3. I agree that the interview will be audio recorded for the use of data analysis; the tapes will be stored securely in line with the University’s data protection policies

4. I agree that any words I may say during the interview can be used, anonymously, in any presentation and publication of the research

5. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant                         Signature                             Date

Name of Researcher                         Signature                             Date

Kim Brown

Version 1 June 06 One copy for researcher and one copy for the participant
## Appendix 6: Connotations of Words in the Metaphysical Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Semantic Meaning (Oxford English Dictionary)</th>
<th>Social Connotations (Based on Researcher Reflection)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eco</strong></td>
<td>From Greek οίκος ‘house’</td>
<td>The branch of biology concerned with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.</td>
<td>‘Eco’ for ecology is becoming a recognised term and is associated in the media with energy reduction, cutting carbon emissions (carbon footprint) and recycling. Aligned to green party politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organic</strong></td>
<td>Organ - Greek ὄργανον ‘tool, sense organ’</td>
<td>1 relating to or derived from living matter. 2 not involving or produced with chemical fertilizers or other artificial chemicals. 3 Chemistry relating to or denoting compounds containing carbon and chiefly or ultimately of biological origin. 4 relating to or affecting a bodily organ or organs. 5 (of the elements of a whole) harmoniously related. 6 characterized by natural development.</td>
<td>Becoming culturally socially acceptable term although in marketing terms associated more with the middle classes, vegetables, and cost. Also has a medical model connotation in relation to organic versus psycho-social.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural</strong></td>
<td>Nature - Latin natura ‘birth, nature, quality’, from nasci ‘be born’</td>
<td>1 existing in or derived from nature; not made, caused by, or processed by humankind. 2 in accordance with nature; normal or to be expected: a natural death. 3 born with a particular skill or quality: a natural leader. 4 relaxed and unaffected. 5 (of a parent or child) related by blood. 6 archaic illegitimate. 7 Music (of a note) not sharpened or flattened. 1 a person with an innate gift or talent. 2 an off-white colour. 3 Music a natural note or a sign (&amp;natl;) denoting one. 4 archaic a person mentally handicapped from birth.</td>
<td>Aligned to organic and ecology in marketing a product as natural i.e. no additives. Natural seen as more acceptable than something that is ‘not natural’. Closely linked to nature. Also linked to Wilderness as in Wilderness Theory. Visceral word (gut feeling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual</strong></td>
<td>From the Latin to breathe,</td>
<td>1 relating to or affecting the human spirit as opposed to material or physical things. 2 relating to religion or religious belief.</td>
<td>Religious connotations. Although a non-denominational term it has the power to evoke different things for different cultures and people. Can be seen as non-scientific although academically there are the elements of theology and philosophy to consider. Within the context of an non-theological academic study the term could be used to promote individual religious beliefs or for those that hold a specific religious belief to denigrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complementary (not to be confused with complimentary)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Latin</strong></td>
<td><strong>I combining so as to form a complete whole or to enhance each other. 2 relating to complementary medicine.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The term is applied to any form of medicine or practice that complements western medical interaction. Practices such as homeopathy, acupuncture, massage, chiropractics, osteopathy, Chinese medicine, herbal and ayurvedic to name but a few such complimentary practices. The majority of which are the more traditional forms of medicine culturally applied over a period of many years. The term refers more to the fact they make no claims to oppose or replace western medicine but merely mean to compliment it. The word is therefore related to the more powerful medical model in this context whilst being merely tolerated at best within many areas of western medicine.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecclesiastical, Religious</strong></td>
<td>regarded as surviving after the death of the body, often manifested as a ghost. 3 a supernatural being. 4 the prevailing or typical character, quality, or mood: the nation’s egalitarian spirit. 5 (spirits) a person’s mood. 6 courage, energy, and determination. 7 the real meaning or intention of something as opposed to its strict verbal interpretation. 8 chiefly Brit. strong distilled liquor such as rum. 9 a volatile liquid, especially a fuel, prepared by distillation. Convey rapidly and secretly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Consent for Website Study
Appendix 8: Ethical Approval and Insurance for Client Study – Amendments
Appendix 9: Client Information Sheet, Consent Form and Diary Keeping Instructions

Research Information Sheet
(Nov 2008 Version 2)

Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning
(Ethics Number PO6-07-02)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you would like more information then please feel free to contact the researcher. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of people, like you, who participate in therapy involving horses.

You have been invited to take part because you are going to participate in therapy or learning involving horses and you have responded to a request for volunteers to take part in this research.

We are hoping that at least three people will keep a diary about their experiences and perceptions on the use of horses in therapy.

We have previously talked to practitioners who involve horses in therapy and learning about their perceptions and experiences. We will not be talking to your practitioners about you.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

A decision not to take part, or a decision to withdraw at any time, will not affect your association with the centre.

If you are taking part in any other similar research into horse therapy or learning, or you are referred to this research through the National Health Service then you will not be able to participate.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to keep a diary about your experiences of horse therapy or learning. This may include your thoughts on the horses, as well as your perceptions of how you feel this type of work may, or may not, benefit people.

You can keep your diary as a written journal or you may prefer to record your diary on a voice recorder. You will be provided with a journal to write in and/or a voice recorder.
It is estimated it will take you around ten minutes following a session with the horses to complete your diary entry, but could take as long or as little time as you like. You may only have one session, in which case you will be asked to record your thoughts on this one session. If you have more sessions then you will be asked to record your diary after each of your sessions.

You can record/write you diary at a time and place convenient to you.

You can withdraw from the study at any point.

The researcher will contact you briefly on a regular basis either by email, text or telephone (as agreed by you) to discuss how the diary completion is going.

What do I have to do?

First you will have a discussion with the researcher about this research and how to record your diary.

Then following your signed consent to take part you will be provided with a written journal and/or a voice recorder (according to your preference).

You can then start your diary when you start the horse therapy or learning. At no point will you have to wait for your sessions because you are taking part in this research.

You will be provided with an information sheet on keeping the diary with some prompts to help you but how you keep your diary and what you record/write is up to you.

Once your diary is finished (and you decide when it is finished) then it can be given to the researcher. The researcher will then ask you for your thoughts on keeping the diary.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You will have to spend some of your time recording your experiences and views on the use of horses in therapy and learning. There is a slight possibility you could become upset as you record your thoughts and feelings. If this does happen, or you become concerned, you can stop the diary at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is not intended there are going to be direct benefits to you from taking part in the study, however, taking part may further understanding of the processes that took place during the horse therapy and learning.

It is hoped that the information we get from the study will help people taking part horse therapy and learning in the future.

What if something goes wrong?

If you have a complaint about the study or the research, then you may contact the researcher direct on kim@soton.ac.uk or telephone/text 07779999945. If your complaint is about the researcher then you can contact Dr. Caroline Ellis-Hill at the University of Southampton (cseh@soton.ac.uk or phone 02380595065).

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly anonymous. All information about you will have your name removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Audiotapes will be kept in a locked drawer in a secure environment. Only the researcher and research supervisors will have access to the information.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The research will be used for a Doctor of Philosophy thesis. Any publications arising from the research will be peer reviewed. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Nor will you be identified through any research details presented at conferences.
Who is organising the research?

The research is being organised through the University of Southampton School of Health Sciences. The primary researcher is Kim Brown who is a PhD student. Supervisors of the research are: Dr. Caroline Ellis-Hill, Dr Paula Kersten, Dr Laetitia Zeeman, and Dr Anne McBride.

Who has reviewed the study?

The Research Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton School of Health Professions and Rehabilitation Sciences (now called the School of Health Sciences) reviewed the study.

Further information

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. If you require further information on the study, or would like to discuss the study in more detail then please contact Kim Brown on kim@soton.ac.uk or telephone/text 07779999945.

If you agree to take part in this study you will be given a copy of this information sheet and signed consent form to keep.

Nov 2008 Version 2
Client Study Consent Form

Equine Assisted Therapy
Ethics Number PO6-07-02

Participant No

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (dated Nov 2008 Version 2) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected

3. I agree that the diaries will be written or audio recorded and for the use of data analysis the tapes and transcripts from the written diaries will be stored securely in line with the University’s data protection policies

4. I agree that any words I may say or write for the diaries can be used, anonymously, in any presentation and publication of the research

5. I agree to take part in the above study and I am aware that this research contributes towards a PhD study

Name of Participant                         Signature                                      Date

Name of Researcher                         Signature                             Date

Please initial box

Nov 2008 Version 2
Keeping your diary information sheet
Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning
Ethics Number PO6-07-02

• There is no right way or wrong way to keep your diary – it is up to you to decide how you keep it and what you put in it

• You can either write your diary in a journal that will be provided or you can record you diary on a voice recorder. The voice recorder and spare tapes will be provided. You will be shown how to use the voice recorder when it is given to you.

• Try to record/write your diary as soon as possible after a horse therapy session

• A horse therapy ‘session’ relates to time you spend together with the horse/s and a therapist

• How long you record/write your diary is up to you. You can keep the diary just for one horse therapy session if that is what you experience, or you can record/write the diary for the length of time you have horse therapy. In this case try to record/write down your thoughts and feelings after each session, although you are under no obligation to record/write your diary after every session

• The length of time you spend recording your diary after each session is up to you.

• You can choose where and when you record/write your diary.

• If you are struggling with what to record/write in your diary, think about things like - in what way the horse/s may have helped you, how you felt during the session, or what you might do differently as a result. You can also use your diary to record/write about your past experiences with horses and what could changes could take place to improve horse therapy.

• You choose when you diary is finished. You might like to finish it before all your sessions, or you might like to wait until all of the sessions are finished (if you have more than one session).

• You might like to record/write some comments at the end of your diary about what it was like for you keeping this diary
• The researcher will contact you as and when agreed to see how your diary keeping is going. No information from this contact will be recorded as part of the research study.

• When you have finished your diary, let the researcher know when she contacts you and arrangements will be made to collect or send by secure post.

• Don’t forget, you can leave this study at any time with no effect on how you are treated at the Centre.

• You are free to withdraw your diary from the study prior to submission to the researcher. If after submission you have concerns about anything you have recorded/written as part of your diary then let the researcher know.

• If you would like your diary returned to you, please ensure you let the researcher know and provide forwarding contact details.

• Support and help line details are attached

• Thank you for taking part, your input may help others in the future with their horse sessions

If you have any queries then contact Kim Brown, PhD Student, University of Southampton, Telephone 07779999945 or email kim@soton.ac.uk
### Appendix 10: Categories of Metaphor Use in GHEI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stair</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural use of</td>
<td>The linguistic expression of metaphor is cultural. What may be a dead</td>
<td>US terminology not necessarily understood in UK where the metaphor would mean something different i.e Barn Environment (Website study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td>metaphor in one culture may be a living metaphor in another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of</td>
<td>Metaphor use is a linguistic tool that provides a juxtaposition of</td>
<td>‘Horse as a mirror’ (Website study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things not</td>
<td>things that are not normally combined (MacCormac 1985).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normally combined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead metaphors</td>
<td>Was originally a metaphor but then developed a sense of its own. Words</td>
<td>‘Insight’ (Client study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>undergo changes in meaning all the time (MacCormac 1985). We are not</td>
<td>‘Mental Illness’ (Practitioner Study and Website study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consciously aware of dead metaphors when we produce and interpret them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates new</td>
<td>Metaphor creates new synapses in the mind and new relationships between</td>
<td>Assigning human feelings and characteristics to horses creates new perceptions of the horses: ‘Josh has never got a cross word to say’, ‘You can email Linus the Horse’, ‘Linus like chess and surfing’ (Website study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>language, thought, and reality (Quinn 1991)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between language,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thought, and reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We don’t only talk about one thing in terms of another we think about</td>
<td>Riding a horse creates a new relationship between life without ‘steer’ and being in charge: ‘To steer me through my days’ (Client study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abstract thought</td>
<td>Metaphor is a tool for abstract thought where people can make sense of</td>
<td>A deep and soulful shift in gear (Client study)</td>
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<td>their experiences (Vico 1975).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Horse as a living metaphor</td>
<td>Metaphor mediates between ordinary language and cognition where it changes how we construct knowledge. McCormac (1985) states that without metaphors our knowledge can not grow. Metaphor can lead to the construction of new meaning (Semino 2008).</td>
<td>Ascribing the characteristics of a specific horse to a famous escapologist where clients may relate to need to escape: 'Remy is like Houdini' (Website study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse as non-verbal metaphor</td>
<td>Metaphor by gesture, sound, objects and images (Tompkins and Lawley 2002, Kopp 1998)</td>
<td>'We verbalise things on a higher level of communication almost instuctual and going back to when we didn’t have language’ (Practitioner study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse as a sensory metaphor - tactile, olfactory and visual</td>
<td>Experiences develop at a level where sensory associations transfer to verbal (MacCormac 1985).</td>
<td>‘Just stand there and watch the horses and being part of the herd really’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>‘She spoke about getting love for the first time back from them and feeling love from them’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fusion of sense with sound (MacCormac 1985). Rorty (1984) calls a metaphor an unfamiliar noise. Pickering (2006 p.158) believes metaphor is more than unfamiliar noise as it expresses an idea that can then be re-categorized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse as a tactile metaphor</td>
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<td>‘And one of the mares just went straight up to her and let her put her arms around her and just hug and she stood there and held onto this horse and cried’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<td>‘Don’t push me and don’t you shove’ (Client study)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapist generated metaphor</td>
<td>Metaphor forces us to respond with emotion (MacCormac 1985).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse as an olfactory metaphor</td>
<td>‘Without the smell of sweat’ (Client study)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse as a visual metaphor</td>
<td>‘Something about their eyes – they always mention their eyes’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autogenic - Client generated metaphor</td>
<td>Herd dynamics and social interaction found in horses is full of metaphors for human societies (EAGALA 2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘I would take people in recovering from some form of abuse and involve horses that themselves had been abused’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘so she’s got this scarring over her nose and what’s fascinating is actually when the kids see it they’ve got their own self harm or scarring you know how they relate to it is unbelievable’ (Practitioner study)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘About the ride and at what pace And that I control the reins’ (Client study)</td>
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</table>
### Appendix 11: Implications for GHEI Practice for Practitioners and Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Implication for Practitioners</th>
<th>Implications for Clients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject positioning of the Client as the Expert</strong></td>
<td>Resist subject positionings such as the practitioner as the expert because of the power dynamics and resistance inherent in that positioning.</td>
<td>You have a responsibility for getting what <em>you</em> want from your interactions with the horses and not what anyone else wants. If you don’t know what you want then just ‘be’ with the horses and not feel you have to do anything.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of risk averse discourse</strong></td>
<td>Try not to draw on dominant risk discourse to the extent the client is alienated.</td>
<td>Horses are large animals, but they are also predictable.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extra discursive (being rather than doing)</strong></td>
<td>Challenge constructions that do not facilitate the extra discursive.</td>
<td>The practitioner may support you to be alongside the horses and not direct you in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positioning of a potential client as at risk if they do not participate in GHEI</strong></td>
<td>Employ marketing strategies that are aimed at positioning the client as physically and cognitively active in GHEI.</td>
<td>Being with horses involves outdoor activities which includes thinking about your actions at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positioning of practitioner as expert</strong></td>
<td>Move towards the horse or the client as the expert to avoid power dynamics and resistance.</td>
<td>If you feel your practitioner is invading your space – ask them to move back. Much the same as you would do with a horse that comes too close without being invited.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Positioning of the horse as expert</strong></td>
<td>Avoids power dynamics and resistance between client and practitioner but a move towards client as expert will enhance their subject positioning and potential for change.</td>
<td>The horse knows about being a horse. You know about being you.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Horse providing the spatial and relational distancing between client and practitioner</strong></td>
<td>Reflect on beliefs that reinforce engagement of certain clients in a close and meaningful relationship. Practice with facilitating sessions with the horse to provide for that level of connection.</td>
<td>GHEI is about your interaction with the horse/s and not so much the practitioner. In this way GHEI is quite different from other types of therapy or learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GHEI is amenable to cultural adaptation</strong></td>
<td>Consider how GHEI is constructed within your specific cultural and social context.</td>
<td>Horses are not separated by language. Horse language is basically the same anywhere in the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Absence of male clients and males as dignitaries and managers</strong></td>
<td>Challenge constructions of females as weak and in need of emotional support. Include voices of male clients where possible.</td>
<td>Interacting with horses can help you find an inner strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High emotional arousal: i.e. fear and love</strong></td>
<td>Not all clients will construct horses as beautiful and spiritual beings.</td>
<td>Interaction with horses has the ability to bypass the intellect and impact direct on emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphysical provides a personal and philosophical basis to practice</strong></td>
<td>Adds further subject position that you can draw on in your practice. Can also ground you in a way that is meaningful for you.</td>
<td>Reflect on what horses mean to you and how they relate to your reasons for participating in GHEI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignment with mental illness services to authorise practice</strong></td>
<td>Adjunct to mental health services and use of language in relation to mental distress will provide a level of authentication for practice. However, consider carefully where you want to place your practice in the longer term.</td>
<td>GHEI can not provide for a medical diagnosis or the prescribing of medication so it is not part of mental health services. However, it can work alongside any treatment plan you might have in place.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement of social discourse to normalise practice</strong></td>
<td>Normalisation of practice may help facilitate client engagement and position client as expert.</td>
<td>Being connected to a herd</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of metaphor and symbol</strong></td>
<td>Reflect on how you use metaphor and symbol in your practice. Do you introduce metaphors or facilitate autogenic metaphor. Do you hijack your client’s metaphors? Consider use of Grovian Clean Language to avoid hijacking.</td>
<td>Can help with approaching a situation that is difficult in an indirect way where you have the control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine power dynamics highly visible</td>
<td>Talking through equine power dynamics with a client may help diminish fear levels</td>
<td>Horses have their own way of being which involves domination by some and subservience by others. Horses enjoy play. The horses may help you try out different roles and ways of being.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of autogenic metaphors</td>
<td>Learn to recognise autogenic metaphors and work with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different styles of processing</td>
<td>Processing is important in creating new patterns and meanings. Consider use of clean language for processing to avoid hijacking autogenic metaphors.</td>
<td>Processing involves you thinking about what a session has meant for you. Sometimes it involves you thinking about it long after the sessions have finished.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merging of different professional backgrounds</td>
<td>Drawing on your own metaphysical beliefs may help blur the boundaries between professions and detract from overt use of authoritative language.</td>
<td>GHEI is not set within the boundaries of any one profession, therefore you may not experience therapy or learning in the same way as you might have previously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing characteristics and social history of the horse/s</td>
<td>Potentially detracts from use of autogenic metaphor</td>
<td>Define the characteristics and behaviours you see in the horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of horse on relational dynamics</td>
<td>Horse provides for a spatial and relational distancing from your client. Horse presence provides permission for you to stand back.</td>
<td>The horse will become what you want it to become. It can be your advisor, therapist, friend, or help you work through your fears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interspecies blurring</td>
<td>GHEI can help construct new humankinds where humans are not separated from animals</td>
<td>In the past humans were not distinct from animals. GHEI is about learning once again to reconnect with a past where we are not separated by human versus animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embodied, symbolic and sensory accounts</td>
<td>Utilise language that is based on client embodied knowledge rather than authoritative knowledge</td>
<td>GHEI is about your personal experience with the horses. It has no technical language that you need to learn in order to participate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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