A critical discourse analysis of equine assisted practice and implications for multispecies social work

Natalie Menyweather  Bachelor of Social Work
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School of Social Sciences
University of the Sunshine Coast
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Abstract

This groundbreaking research within the field of social work provides a space to explore language around non-human animals, in particular horses, and how they are involved in animal assisted practice. The implications for multispecies social work are discussed out of a rigorous discourse analysis method. Throughout this research the question of non-human animals within social work practice, research and ethics is considered.
Declaration of Originality

This declaration of originality is attesting that the work does not contain material which has been previously published or written by any person other than the candidate except where due and proper reference has been given in the text.

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A critical discourse analysis of equine assisted practice and implications for multispecies social work

Horses speak in silence, never forgetting to listen. (Resnick 2005, p. 215)

I have loved horses since I could remember loving horses, before then I just ate fruit, preferably guavas through the railings of the balcony; high enough to reach the trees. On Norfolk Island as a toddler I learnt to swim in the quiet waters of the bay and leapt at the joy of sitting in my dad’s wheelbarrow, harmonising my singing with the songs of the birds. (Menyweather 2016)

1.0 Introduction

The research explores the dominant discourses and language used in animal assisted social work and how they may impact the culture of Animal Assisted Practice (AAP) and Equine Assisted Practice (EAP). This section outlines the research problem, question and goals highlighting how social work itself is located within the research problem because of its lack of regard for non-human animals. The premise of this research is inter-connections of all living beings. In addition it acknowledges commonalities between cultures of discrimination, regardless of species and is therefore relevant to social work. Hanrahan (2010) writes, “I have also come to recognize and am witness to animals as marginalized groups whose exploitation is symbolically and empirically linked to the exploitation of marginalised and disenfranchised groups of humans.” (p. 275),

In this ground breaking text Animals and Social Work: A Moral Introduction (2011) Thomas Ryan argues that, “Social work’s dogmatic anthropocentrism is metaphysical, conceptualising ourselves as different in kind from all other animals, and it services to obscure our understanding of the human animal.” (p. 5)

The main arguments of the research are introduced in this section to outline how social work is placed within the research problem, with its lack of regard for non-human animals and how this may influence this research into EAP/AAP. This research is based on the connection of all living beings acknowledging commonalities between cultures of discrimination, which is understood to be linked regardless of species, and is therefore relevant to social work.

The introduction will outline and define key concepts within the research question, covering the aims and objectives of the research, the research problem, the reasons for the research and the significance and innovation of the research.
1.1 The research question and objective(s)

The field of social work has long been focused on social justice and human rights (AASW 2013). It is the strong socio-political value base, which has separated social work from other helping professions. This research, coming from a social work perspective, will broaden these values and ethical considerations to include those of our co-species, non-human animals (animals), to analyse the nature of involvement of animals, in particular, horses, in social work.

The main research question is:

To what extent does equine assisted practice involve emancipatory multispecies ethics & practices whereby people and horses engage in mutual, non-exploitative relationships?

The ethical theory, which has been applied, asks, “What does a caring response require in this situation? (McAuliffe, 2014, p.42)” This ethic of care according to feminist theory focuses on power and how it is formed in social relationships. While no single theory is efficient and ethical pluralism is adopted, postmodern perspectives inform the belief that there are multiple ethical truths on the one issue (McAuliffe, 2014, p.42). An emancipatory ethics however, requires an ethical capacity that benefits the least powerful group in a situation and in this regard, there is a bottom line of ethical behavior for the researcher that refuses to act to exploit or harm other beings, in particular, animals.

Multispecies ethics is best defined as deep love and care for all species, which is not monolithic or one dimensional but can be contradictory and shifting depending on the context thereby applying an ethic of love (Ross 2016, p. 1). An emancipatory multispecies ethics is sought after within this research as it contradicts the cultural norm of one ethics just for humans, and therefore includes multiple species within an ethical viewpoint, for example having ethical concern for both horses and humans within a practice setting.

For the purpose of the research, exploitative relationships are an example of oppression and occur through the transfer of the results of the labour of one social group to benefit another (Young 1990, p. 49). Mutual and equal relationships will not involve exploitation. Therefore, the research will be seeking to understand to what extent horses are acknowledged and related to mutually or in terms of exploitation of their labour for the benefit of people. Young writes,

In both slave society and feudal society, the right to appropriate the product of labour of others partly defines class privilege, and these societies legitimate class (or species) distinctions with ideologies of natural superiority and inferiority. (1990, p. 48)
Exploitation is crucial in understanding the nature of EAP/AAP in practice, discourse, and the history of human and non-human relationships. Concepts such as ‘dualisms’ and ‘othering’ will be introduced later in the chapter to illustrate some of the ways in which exploitation has occurred historically and to explain how it has informed the current social culture and norms in the treatment of non-human animals.

The primary aim of the research is to undertake a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of key EAP and AAP texts to understand the nature of dominant discourses operating in the field. This understanding may provide a basis for contributing to a public debate to ensure non-human animals are engaged as respected, equal and non-exploited partners in helping people.

1.2 The research problem

I noticed as I grew up the combination of nature and horses becoming more and more blurred. Although I never thought it out loud there were all these dots joining all forces of life. I traced photos of horses into my diary as a child longing to touch and be with these magnificent beings. At the same time in my life my dad and mother were already separated, I knew one of the reasons for this was gambling and the horse racing industry. Today I am left thinking how could horses go from beings of admiration to also being used like a part in a culture of exploitation? (Menyweather 2016)

The research problem started with a search for a useful theoretical framework with a key question in mind - What can practitioners using a critical social work approach learn from ‘being with’ horses and the experience of equine assisted practice? Paraphrasing hooks (1994, p. 74), I came to theory because, considering myself part of a multispecies community, I was hurting and I witnessed animals hurting. The hurt and pain for me came as I was witnessing in society, an unquestioned violence towards animals. The societal context for the research shows a bias against animals known as speciesism, which raises some difficult questions for me given my interest in working with animals to help people. Wolf (2000, p. 1) describes speciesism as ‘discrimination based on species’ and reports ‘social workers are urged to reflect on and discuss the issues of whether differential treatment based on species is justified’. Thompson defines discrimination as those actions, which cause harm on the basis of unfair social practices such as marginalisation & stereotyping (2011, p. 91). When on average, Americans eat ‘the equivalent of 21,000 entire animals in a life time’ (Safran Foer 2009, p. 121); discrimination is established by representing animals as objects, pieces of meat, rather than as sentient co-species. In this way animals are stereotyped as ‘things’, which signifies speciesism and a downward spiral which then leads to a culture where it is acceptable to kill and eat animals, use them in circuses, violate their basic rights in medical experiments. Potentially to mistreat animals may also occur in therapeutic settings.
I purposely locate the introduction to the research problem in my personal and professional experiences in order to research the nature of equine assisted practice and to understand how our relationships with animals are described in the literature. Further because I want to establish to what extent work with horses in equine assisted practice is occurring in a mutually respectful way, therefore, I have incorporated standpoint feminism (Lewis 1992, p. 178) which recognises that it is not possible to undertake research from a value or power neutral standing point. Furthermore, the idea of standpoint can be understood as a non-fixed, non-finished and continually created positioning and theorising area of research (Davies & Harries 1990). For the purpose of this research standpoint theorising involves the researcher as a historically located, embodied, gendered human with close human and non-human relationships, with a desire to work in mutually respectful ways with animals.

As Payne outlines, ‘social work theory in general, and practice theory in particular, is socially constructed in interactions between clients and practitioners in their agencies and in wider political, social and cultural arenas. This makes it clear that we build both practice and theory through our experience operating in the real world; they are not given to us from on high’ (2014, p. 3). Thus, the research problem is explained from the standpoint of my embodied experiences alongside animals, which have influenced the social justice and anti-oppressive theoretical stance of this research (Thompson 2011, pp. 23-24). I build on these initial observations and theorising to extend my analysis of the problem to the wider political, social and cultural dimensions of speciesism, including the anthropocentric nature of social work (Hanrahan, 2011 and Ryan 2011, p.5). I am interested in understanding the research problem from social constructions of the human-animal relationship and how this might have implications for the nature of equine assisted practice. This research seeks to understand how far the dominant discourses relating to animals in helping roles with humans are reproduced in this relatively new field of practice. In turn, I want to explore what critical social work with its professed emancipatory aims (Thompson 2011, p. 51) might be able to contribute to the development of equine assisted practice.

1.2.1 Salient experiences become a practice problem

I was the child in the car who when we hit a bird driving, I would make my mum drive back, see if she was alright, and if she needed to be taken to the emergency vet. Animals are my family, my teachers and my friends. The same compassion, morals, ethics, justice and rights considerations I have for the bird that got hit by the car is what drove me to study social work.

I began my work in the field whilst studying my social work degree, first in crisis houses for homeless young people and then spent over a year in a remote community with a high indigenous population working with families and children. What struck me there in the country, working alongside indigenous families, were the animals; flora and fauna are truly part of family. I
supported one family for months, advocating for their horse to be released from the pound and then finding a suitable paddock where she could stay and not escape. The horse was integral to the family’s wellbeing and without that horse the family was struggling. I worked with another family who were overcrowded and taking in kids on the street as well as looking after their own children, some of the children were unwell, I had the capacity in my role to support the children to get some health care and needs met, however found it much more difficult to get support for the starving mother living underneath the house, whose litter of puppies had died and/or were dying, and another male dog with a broken leg which had been untreated. I witnessed these things in my assessment of the family’s needs, however, it was not expected I ask about the dog’s needs, unless the family brought it up, it was expected I support the humans only. I ended up making an anonymous referral to the local department of primary industries, however this was a delicate issue for which the family had not asked for my support.

It was about this time, not even finished my formal social work studies, I began to look more closely for ways to align the work I was doing with that described in social work literature. I immediately looked to the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) which state under their code of ethics, ‘social work operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments. Human needs are always seen in the context of socio-political and environmental factors’ (2013, p. 7). The AASW explains that social work can involve ‘work with individuals, work with families, work with groups, work with communities, social policy practice, management, leadership and administration, education and training, research and evaluation’. It was not clear to me where animals fit into social work if at all, as the anthropocentric nature of social work is not generally questioned or challenged.

I then went to work in the disability sector in the community where I saw animal assisted practice occurring formally and informally with guide dogs and riding for the disabled. I worked in prisons where I witnessed the men training guide dogs in residential facilities, and in a women’s prison, taking in sick animals and nursing them to health so they could be adopted by members of the community. By this time, I had graduated with my social work degree and still had no practice framework from my studies to guide how I might work with humans and animals, in particular, with which ethics to consider. It highlighted to me there are no species who deserve their life to be more important than the other; all species have a will to live. These experiences as a social worker have greatly influenced this research and the research problem. I would like to be able to work with non-humans in practice and I would like for there to be more guidelines and standardized policies around the ethical and moral treatment of animals in social work.
1.2.2 The socio-political dimensions of the problem

The problem of social work, not including co-species in its ethics or practice standards, is influenced by the ‘political-social-ideological arena’, which highlights the socially constructed nature of social work (Payne 2014, p. 17). Social constructionism outlines how ‘social work is socially constructed by our practice, the people and organisations involved with us and the theories that inform our practice’ (Payne 2014, p. 17). Stibbe (2001, p. 46) explains what this means for animals, ‘one of the main reasons that animals are excluded from discussions of language and power is that they are not, themselves, participants in their own social construction through language.’ Thus, there is no way for animals to represent themselves in discourse, instead they are created in the everyday actions and discourses of humans and, ‘in animals, the power is completely coercive, carried out by a few people involved in organisations that farm and use animals’ (Stibbe 2001, p. 146). It is in this same social arena that decisions are made about whom humans’ value and whom we do not value enough to involve in social work practice and where this may have contradictory effects. For example, humans may devalue other animals enough to kill and eat them, or use them for scientific experiments. However, according to the ethics of this research, this does not represent a rights based approach and thus involves oppressive actions towards non-human animals (Francione & Charlton 2013). The animals that are being harmed or killed are not being treated as sentient beings with rights to live without being exploited or used for human purposes (Francione & Charlton 2013).

At this stage, it is unclear how speciesism might inform social work practice, where animals are incorporated into therapy or learning sessions. It is also unclear to what extent the developing field of equine assisted practice might also be subject to the dominant discourse of speciesism and possibly other social constructs, which reinforce this main bias against animals. These concerns will be explored by introducing the field of animal assisted practice, in particular equine assisted learning and equine assisted therapy, and then proceeding to identify some of the current politics in this practice area, which have informed the research problem.

1.2.3 Animal assisted practice

I have a deep desire to make a clear distinction here about what I mean by an animal. I mean all of us; me; you, here reading this. The cat whom you are the guardian of and who is your loved companion. The cat you sleep with, the dog you play on the beach with. We are all animals, yet during this research I am calling non-humans animals (even though we are all one), just different species. We don’t own animals, we don’t own ourselves, we just be. I am in constant communion with my friends, my beautiful well-loved friends of all animal kinds. (Menyweather 2016)
Animal assisted therapy (AAT) seems to be the most widely used term within the field of AAP (Fine 2010; DeMello 2012). Animal assisted therapy ‘uses specially trained animals to help with the mental, physical, and emotional care of patients who suffer from a variety of complaints’ (DeMello 2012, p. 204). It is well documented in the literature that the research in the field of animal assisted practice has only really ‘scratched the surface’ of many of the considerations in this work (Fine 2010, p. 551). There are a number of documented instances where animals have been hurt or made unwell from being involved in interventions and practice with humans (Heimlich 2001; Wycoff 2014). For example, in animal assisted practice with a dog, Cody, who was working in a program with young children, he was treated for an ear infection and urinary tract infection with antibiotics after an eight week visiting therapy program. As his health didn’t improve he was then given another round of antibiotics (Heimlich 2001). Cody went into another eight-week program and continued to get unwell and finally was diagnosed with Cushing’s syndrome, ‘a result is excessive production of hormones by the adrenal glands and is often the result of chronic stress’ (Heimlich 2001, p. 52). There are other accounts such as ‘the canine comfort dog who travels with his handler to disaster sites, but who is so overwhelmed by the experience and anxious about the demands of the role, that he is unable to regularly eliminate or defecate and won’t even touch his food while on the road’ (Wycoff 2014, p. 3).

1.2.4 About the field of equine assisted practice

For the purpose of the research, the term of equine assisted practice (EAP) will be used and as such it will encompass the terms of ‘equine assisted therapy (EAT)’, ‘equine assisted learning (EAL)’, and equine assisted psychotherapy/counselling (EAP/EAC). The analysis proceeds from an inclusive approach to social work, which is inclusive and acknowledges these inter-related areas of development with animals but goes beyond it as well. The purpose is not to colonise animal assisted practice initiatives, rather to find a way of exploring the existing ways of working with animals within a critical approach. A brief account of the main approaches to animal assisted practice and working with horses to enable people’s learning and well-being is provided to establish the practice context and rationale for the research.

One of the primary ways EAP is described in the literature is in terms of what constitutes therapy when working with people and animals (Fine 2010, p. 34). There is a strong impetus to ensure that recreational interactions and therapy are not confused and therefore recreational animal participation is not called therapy (Fine 2010, p. 34). EAT and EAP share the main goal of, ‘help[ing] the client make unconscious feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and actions conscious’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 282). The secondary goal of EAT is to provide the client with an opportunity to be aware of their ‘power of choice’ and therefore have the option of changing patterns that negatively impact on their lives (Hallberg 2008, p. 282).

Equine assisted psychotherapy, as Shultz explains,
Is an emerging therapeutic intervention used in a variety of mental health settings, particularly in the treatment of adolescence? Equine assisted psychotherapy is a type of recreational therapy loosely related to animal-assisted therapy. It combines traditional therapeutic interventions with a more innovative component involving relationships and activities with horses. (2005, p. 7)

In addition, *equine assisted therapy* is also defined not so much as a theoretical orientation as a practice whereby horses are integral to the therapeutic process (Masini 2010, p. 30). Equine assisted practitioners can work with a very large range of client groups involving individuals, families, groups, children, adolescents, adults with a variety of therapeutic and learning needs depending on the practitioner’s area of interest and skills (Masini 2010, p. 34).

*Equine facilitated learning* involves working with people to explore an area of their lives they wish to learn more about, for example developing life skills, social skills, communication skills, work ethic and vocational skills (Hallberg 2008, p. 365). Equine facilitated learning is designed to provide all of the benefits of equine assisted counselling or therapy, ‘without the deeply probing, personal insight-based nature of the service.’ (Hallberg 2008, p.365) An equine facilitated learning participant is offered opportunities to connect with horses and to learn skills experientially alongside horses as explained, ‘it is far more intriguing, fun and challenging to clean out a horse’s hoof, learn the food that each horse eats and why, or hold a horse for the vet than it is to be taught how to brush your own teeth, go shopping, plan a menu, or learn why it’s (sic) important to go to the doctor or dentist for regular check-ups’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 367).

*Equine assisted practice*, including therapy and learning, is located under a broader umbrella of work with animals most commonly called animal assisted interventions, described by Kruger and Serpell as ‘a category of promising complimentary practices that are still struggling to demonstrate their efficacy and validity’ (cited in Fine 2010, p. 33). Despite this range of definitions, the field of equine assisted practice is particularly under-developed in the literature in terms of explicit theoretical underpinnings (Fine 2010, p. 37). The lack of evidence of informed debates and theory building could have contradictory or oppressive implications for participants – both human and animals. As Ryan explains,

> The very fact that untold numbers of animals are routinely sacrificed worldwide in the pursuit of human health and wellbeing rates nary a mention in social work literature, and no social work code of ethics, or social work ethics groups, even acknowledge, let alone debate the morality of the issue. (2011, p. 162)

The following example shows how for a particular horse, their involvement in human therapy and learning may not be in their interests:
The sensitive horse was selected by an Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT) program to provide equine assisted psychotherapy to large groups of participants three days a week. This horse is not naturally drawn to socialise with people. Not surprisingly, most days the staff can’t even get him in from the pasture because he chooses to stay as far away as he possibly can from the barn (where the therapeutic interactions take place). (Wycoff 2014, p. 3)

Thus, it is important to explore the dominant discourses operating to enable a dialogue between stakeholders as to the congruence between the stated aims of the equine assisted practice and the experiences of the participants, including the animals.

1.2.5 Dominant discourses in equine assisted practice

This research is concerned with discourse within which ‘language has a magical property: when we speak or write we craft what we have to say to fit (sic) the situation or context in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak or write creates (sic) that very situation or context’ (Gee 2005, p. 11). Thus, the more equine assisted practitioners are crafting their practice around the current language and discourse in the field, adopting dominant ways of thinking and acting, the more they might be risking their own integrity. For example, the current literature uses very medicalised & deficits oriented language where ‘treatment plans’ are created for ‘special needs populations’ and focuses on people who may struggle from ‘dysfunctions of the brain’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 365).

Furthermore, the literature describes participants as a population who generally do not benefit from ‘insight or cognitive processing based therapies’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 365). It is well recognised that such medicalised language can be oppressive due to its discriminatory effects on socially de-valued groups (Thompson 2011, p. 90). Inter-relatedly, the dominance of the medical model in all spheres of helping has resulted in what Illich called ‘the medicalisation of life’ (Thompson 2011, p. 126).

From an anti-oppressive perspective, discourses can reinforce dominating relationships between people, animals and the eco-system (Plumwood 1993, 2002; Mies & Shiva 1993). As Stibbe (2001, p. 146) emphasises, ‘with rare exceptions, the role of discourse in the domination by humans of other species has been almost entirely neglected in the field of critical discourse analysis’.

Furthermore, Ryan (2011, p. 66) argues that to respect the dignity of human and non-human animals, ‘careful and thoughtful consideration of key subject matters is needed including the nature of consciousness, instinct, intelligence, language and the relationship between nature and nurture.’ It is language and discourse which this research is interested in carefully and thoughtfully analysing, as it is
understood as a vehicle which has the potential to shape the way society constructs and treats animals, and therefore considers animals in the field of equine assisted practice.

1.3 The reasons for the research

The proposed research needs to be undertaken to ensure the rights, justice and power issues in human-animal relationships, in particular in equine assisted practice, are considered and analysed as part of the emancipatory agenda for social work. The research focuses on human language in the written form where language’s functions are ‘to scaffold the performance of social activities (whether play or work or both) and to scaffold human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions’ (Gee and Handford 2012, p. 1). At this stage in the field’s development, the language relating to equine assisted practice has not been analysed which may leave unnoticed and un.questioned the way dominant discourses are shaping this development. As Gee and Handford (2011, p. 1) explain, ‘language-in-use is everywhere and always political’. Therefore, the research seeks to explore the extent to which dominant discourses such as speciesism and a professionalised approach are operating, and with what effects in terms of power when animals are involved in helping people.

The research may contribute to an acknowledgement of non-human animal’s valuable role in the lives of humans generally and specifically in relation to social work practice with animals. In so doing, it may challenge the exclusionary and anthropocentric nature of social work where,

Social workers (apologies to those who beg to differ) (sic) do not conceive human beings and other animals as kindred creatures. And it is this (sic) metaphysic that makes all (sic) the difference in our response to practice situations and dilemmas. (Ryan 2011, p. 154)

By acknowledging non-human animals as co-species, given we are all animals of differing species, opportunities for the people who access social workers to engage with humans and animals in receiving social work services may be increased. Further questions need to be answered about dominant exploitative constructs impact the ways non-human animals are involved in social work. At this early stage in its development as a field of practice, it is troubling that there may be an unquestioning acceptance of dominant discourses being transferred onto work involving animals. As Stibbe (2001, p. 147) notes, ‘how animals are socially constructed influences how they are treated by human society’.

There may be an opportunity to influence how equine assisted practice develops if the power dynamics of working with horses can be exposed to open up informed discussions with people who have a vested interest in this area of practice. Through dialogue and an ethical regard for all animals, it may be possible to re-construct the premises of equine assisted practice. In this way, insights from this exploration may
enable a more multispecies premise aligned with the social justice imperatives of social work (Ryan 2011; Plumwood 1999) for the mutual gain of people, animals and the ecosystem.

To date, there has been no critical discourse analysis undertaken in the field of equine assisted practice known to this researcher. Creativity is used in the research design to ask pressing questions of the literature, creating awareness of the silent and objectified other, specifically non-human animals, in dominant discourses. The relevance of the critical discourse analysis relates to how it can highlight ethical issues and oppression embedded in language, which may not otherwise be noticed or apparent. A critical discourse analysis offers micro, meso and macro material to inform a multi-layered discussion, which provides a high level of academic rigour and integrity to address the research question. This can provide grounds to question the dominant cultural as well as political and social norms in relation to EAP/AAP and to explore the implications for social work.

The current research seeks to make a significant contribution in the re-construction of ethical premises of the social work profession to include non-human animals as co-species with corresponding rights to be treated with respect and justice. Discussion arising from the research material, will address the exclusion of animals from the social work profession’s Code of Ethics and mission (AASW 2010).
2.0 Literature Review

Social work professionals who recognise the impact of other animals on people’s lives are in a position to enhance the lives of both people and other animals. (Risley-Curtiss, cited in DeMello 2010, p. 287)

*If there was a simpler way to describe how I have come to this research, I would. However, I have been so conditioned, spent too many days thinking social work was just about people and had this viewpoint justified by most social work theories. I had to look in corners, in tiny spaces within several theories to come to this research. There was no other way. Within social work on human animal’s needs, rights and theory building, is a patchwork of tiny marginalised spaces. (Menyweather 2016)*

2.1 Introduction

The fact that this research is located in the field of social work presents a conundrum as social work provides the practice context and much of the informing theoretical approach, and at the same time is deeply implicated in the dominant discourses that perpetuate discrimination against non-human species. One of the key sources contributing to an understanding of Australian social work is the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW), which defines social work as:

The social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (AASW 2013, p. 4)

There is no explicit mention in the AASW’s (2013) definition of social work of the need to address animal rights and interests. Rather, the anthropocentric dominant discourse is perpetuated. For example, in reference to the International Federation of Social Work, the AASW states:

In maintaining consistency with the IFSW’s point in time definition, the Practice Standards has adopted the term ‘people’ for use throughout this document. The term ‘people’ is understood to mean ‘individuals, families and other kinship arrangements, groups, communities, organisations and societies with whom social workers work (sic). (AASW 2013, p. 4)

As Ryan argues, orthodox social work definitions would have us believe that,
The negative (for including animals in social work) appears so obvious that it is not even considered necessary to be dignified with, or justified by, reasoned moral argument; the wellbeing of animals and the natural world, apart from serving instrumental and aesthetic ends, is of no consequence or importance for social work. (2011, p. 3)

Pease and Fook (1999) claim there is a, ‘need for social work to transform itself from a traditional profession with a unified theory and practice base, and to learn to operate in diverse settings, with diverse value systems and population groups (p.10)’. Other than a few exceptions there is no attention within social work to the human animal bond (Risley-Curtiss, cited in DeMello 2010, p. 281). Although in her chapter titled ‘Living up to Ecological Practice’, Risley-Curtiss (cited in DeMello 2010, pp. 281-298) highlights the grounding of social work practice theories and values to explain the significance of non-human animals in social work. The argument for social work and the need to be inclusive of non-human animals is explained as,

The practice of social work is grounded in an ecological-systems perspective that requires one to view human beings within the context of their environments and as constantly in reciprocal interaction with significant others. (Risley-Curtiss, cited in DeMello 2010, p. 281)

When analysing the history of social work and society’s relationship with animals it is imperative that this discussion begin with a critical appreciation of the ontological, ethical and political bases of speciesism and social work’s part in the anthropocentric bias. In the next section an outline is provided of critical social work theory, which affords the anti-oppressive feminist approach to the research and enables questions to be asked of the current state of social work and the lack of inclusion of non-humans. Within this framework the argument is developed that the underpinning dualisms and othering, which separate non-human animals and humans, serve dominant interests in contemporary society. In turn such separations are possible because of the de-valuing of a range of other human identities and is typically expressed as dominant discourses based on racism, sexism, ageism and classism (Thompson 2011, pp. 100-117). It is suggested that social work’s ethical and theoretical knowledge is insufficiently developed to address the research problem of speciesism in its practice (Ryan 2011, p. 5).

The literature review illustrates key themes within eco-centric ontological, epistemological, ethical and theoretical considerations that could begin to address this limitation in social work. The exploration of the themes within the literature is explored through the history of horses and humans, which has predominantly involved othering animals. The value of adopting animal rights and eco-centric ideas is argued as these inform a relational and moral nature of being and knowing. The literature review also describes the influence of dominant ideas such as neoliberalism, which have contributed to specific
language uses and dualistic biases in discourses of helping. The influence of ecofeminism in both providing much of the theoretical framing of the research and the lens for questioning the neoliberal discourses is outlined within the literature review as well.

2.2 Critical social work

The research incorporates characteristics of critical social work as it provides a way of questioning the dominant discourses that maintain social and species inequalities. Critical social work is driven by critical theory wherein how the term ‘critical’ is used depends on the ideology and world view of the user (Fook 2012; Pease & Fook 1999; Brookfield 2005, p. 11). For present purposes, a critical approach includes a ‘concern to provide people with knowledge and understandings to free them from oppression’ (Brookfield 2005, p. 25). The aim is to ‘break down the separation of subject and object, of researcher and focus of research, found in traditional theories’ (Brookfield 2005, p. 26). Further, ‘the fact that verification of the theory is impossible until the social vision it inspires is realised’ (Brookfield 2005, p. 29) provides critical theory with its ethical imperative. This research seeks to adopt a critical theoretical approach in order to unsettle subject and object dualisms in order to address oppression (Brookfield 2005, p. 25) between species. In turn, the critical perspective within this research ‘rejects especially those aspects or approaches to women’s liberation which endorse or fail to challenge the dualistic definition of women and nature and/or the inferior status of nature’ (Plumwood 1993, p. 39). Critical social work extends critical theory by, incorporating progressive social work ethics and values and by its commitment to a structural analysis of social and personal problems, emancipatory forms of analysis and social change (Fook 2012, pp. 5-6).

The influence of post-modern ideas in critical social work have bought a focus to the value of recognising the power of language and discourse for building an understanding of how to address discrimination and harm in clients and communities. Pease and Fook (1999, p. 122) write that the ‘the notion of discourse is central to post structural theory, and hence attention is drawn to the representation of worker and client identities in activist practice discourses’. At this time, activist practice discourses in social work do not include non-human beings. What is the role of the animal in the scenario of equine assisted practice in social work? Are they the client, the worker, or another identity? Where do the rights, needs and agency sit for the animal if they do not have a clear role and responsibilities for their care are blurred? There is no current discursive space for interested social workers to ask these questions and to consider the nature of practice with non-human animals.

In turn, the AASW’s (2010, pp. 17-23) Code of Ethics explains the general responsibilities of social workers as involving respect for human dignity and worth, culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice,
commitment to social justice and human rights social work service and propriety, commitment to practice competence, professional boundaries and dual relationships and conflicts of interests. However, there is no consideration given to ethics, rights, morals or ways of being pertaining to non-human animals in this influential document.

2.3 Speciesism and othering in social work

This section will discuss how social workers practice alongside other species, whether this is actually possible morally and ethically, and if there is a space for social work to move away from the anthropocentric discourses as a profession and avoid speciesism when involved with animals in practice.

Within the literature on human and animal relationships, anthromorphism is often confused with anthropocentrism. The aforementioned dualism relates to the key research idea of anthropocentrism which is premised on the western idea of nature as a resource for human ends rather than being intrinsically worthy of respect (Zimmerman, cited in Oelschlaeger 1992, p. 99). In comparison anthromorphism can be best described as, ‘the attribution of supposedly human qualities to nonhuman animals’ (DeMello 2012, p. 11). For example, projection of so called human emotions onto animals, dogs wearing clothing and having doggy birthdays. For the purposes of this research, the term speciesism is used to convey ‘discrimination based on species’ (Wolf 2000, p. 1). Thus, speciesism is encompassing of anthropocentrism but goes beyond it, and may have elements of anthropomorphism, whereby giving human qualities to non-humans there is an implied disregard for the non-human’s uniqueness’s and differences, which makes them who they are. These points are reinforced by Hanhrahan when she articulates, ‘I contend that challenging speciesism and the anthropocentrism of social work is a de-civilizing (sic) undertaking, one that calls attention to our very culpability as a species in instigating and participating in the oppressive politics of “othering”.’ (2011, p. 283).

The political context of social work practice is not inherently progressive. However, for the last decades has been predominantly the rise of neoliberalism which has constrained the progressive elements of social work and implicated the profession in the social control of disadvantaged social groups (Wallace & Pease 2011, p. 133).

In particular, ‘the literature thus suggests that the impact of neoliberalism ranges across broad structural and organisational frameworks, from policy design and process to consideration of values and constructs of practice’ (Wallace & Pease 2011, p. 133). One of the consequences of neoliberalism is the role of social work as agents of state control whereby ‘social work continues to be seen by the government and the state as having a role to play, primarily in the management of problem individuals and families’ (Ferguson
The way in which neoliberalism influences the history of horses and the language which describes them in particular will be discussed further in a later section of the literature review.

Where there have been attempts made to understand the impact of neoliberalism new theories and knowledge to guide practice has been developed. Green theory can contribute to this development and the inclusion of animals in the social works thinking. According to Dominelli (2013) Green theory characterised by,

A form of holistic professional social work practice that focuses on the interdependencies among people; the social organisation of relationships between people and the flora and fauna in their physical habitats; and the interactions between socio-economic and physical environmental crises and interpersonal behaviours that undermine the well-being of human-beings and planet Earth. (p. 55)

Ryan asserts that the importance of acknowledging animals is integral to ‘our terrestrially and our ontological continuity and kinship, and the moral and ethical implications that issue from such recognition’ (2011, p. 151). For example, in Australia more than 63% of people have a non-human animal living in their home (Australian Animal Council 2009) and as such have potentially limitless scope to foster, and in some instances may already be experiencing non-exploitative, mutually beneficial relationships with non-human animals. The benefits living with non-human animals have been widely researched and are seen to positively influence companionship, social engagement, cardiovascular health, stress and bereavement, children, social development and family life (Australian Animal Council 2009). While there has been some attention paid to the benefits for humans having contact with other animals, less attention is given to how animals are affected by human contact. However, some research and writing is becoming available for the general public, such as ‘Animal Madness’ (Braitman 2014). Social work however is largely absent from these discussions and possible practice developments where animals are engaged to help people. The valuing of non-human animals as co-species requires a different order of values and practice approaches than are currently operating in social work. For example, the way in which the human and ‘non human animal’ are described in language is in itself another speciesist act in which non-human animals are objectified (Hanrahan 2011, p. 274). The current culture of speciesism is highlighted within a social work perspective that looks to the future development of interspecies relationships via language. Hanrahan (2011) hopes,

... That one day a relational consciousness will replace oppositional and hierarchical taxonomy and nomenclature, and the concepts of integrity, connectedness, and accountability will replace
value-laden dualisms in which the meaning of the first item is dependent on the demeaning of the second. (p. 274)

Even within emerging social work fields in America such as veterinary social work, speciesism is evident. For instance, Strand advises, ‘students who want to put animals first to explore a career in animal welfare and cautions social work students to remember their speciality is addressing the needs of people’ (cited in Jackson 2013, p. 6). Statements such as this from Strand, described as ‘a pioneer in the field who helped define the speciality’ (cited in Jackson 2013, p. 6) makes the duality between the human and the non-human world apparent within related emerging areas of social work practice.

Morley and Fook (2005, p. 134) describe the dichotomising of the human-animal bond whereby ‘animal companionship is understood, and defined, solely in terms of human companionship, rather than in its own terms, and suffers in the comparison’. Following on from these points the research seeks to show the need for a new way of working in the field of equine assisted practice where the human-animal bond is redefined. Nevertheless, as Plumwood argues, ‘any representation of speech-content for a human audience will have to be an interpretation in terms of human concepts, and in that weak sense, a background level of anthropomorphism is always likely to be present’ (2002, p. 57). Further, Plumwood writes,

What is much more difficult to demonstrate is that anthropomorphism of this background kind, in the weak sense of employing a human conceptual apparatus or conceptual location, is necessarily harmful or invalidating, or that there are no practices which can counter it. (2002, p. 57)

The research pivots on the ethical dilemma of it being a human centred exploration of the extent to which the relevant literature reflects dominant anthropocentric discourses. As such, it risks recreating the very same dominant discourses it is critiquing and wishing to unsettle and change. It is acknowledged that this is an unresolvable contradiction of desiring to not be authoritative in relation to animal’s experiences and interests while acting with authority as the researcher. The ethical task is to focus on human’s relationship with horses to challenge and hold ourselves accountable to the extent it can be established that dominant discourses may indicate oppressive practices in relation to work with animals.

Dualistic and dichotomising power dynamics appear to be operating within anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, neoliberal and patriarchal discourses shaping the experiences and valuing of non-humans. At the same time, there is a sense of distancing from the norm and from what is considered part of the community. For animals, this distancing has meant an exclusion from social work practice and is described in the literature as ‘othering’ (DeMello 2012, p. 258). The othering of animals starts with how the law positions non-humans,
Animals are things (sic) that we own and that have only extrinsic or conditional value as means to our ends. We may as a matter of personal choice attach a higher value to our companion animals, such as dogs and cats, but as far as the law is concerned these animals are nothing more than commodities. (Francione 2008, p. 108)

Horses have been ‘othered’ to the point that pain and discomfort is inflicted on them every day. For the purpose of the research, ‘othering refers to the practice of making people - or animals - different in order to treat them differently’ (DeMello 2012, p. 258). Othering has influenced equine culture with many ex-racehorses who spent years working hard for human’s financial and social gain being sold to ‘doggers’ to be made into dog food when their ability to race or be used in racing is determined over (The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses 2016).

Othering works on the premise that ‘the further we can distance those that we do not like or do not want to share resources with, the more we can mistreat them’ (DeMello 2012, p. 259). Accepted practices such as these show how horses are not afforded the same rights as humans and are not considered to be intelligent beings with feelings, where in turn some humans unquestioningly abuse horses for human’s own pleasure and financial gain. For instance, historically, the dominant belief was that ‘to train horses, it is essential that we have a very clear understanding of the way in which their small minds work and appreciate how limited they are in this department’ (Rousseau, cited in Griffin 1978, p. 77). Even when considering animal welfare there is unprecedented violence towards animals occurring from the ‘othering’ where, ‘welfare changes are based on such considerations as increasing productivity or reducing labour costs and do not recognise animals have inherent value requiring that we respect their interests even when there is no benefit to us’ (Francione 2008, pp. 112-113).

In more recent times in Western societies, there still exists a dichotomous relationship between humans and horses in the way humans relate to and ‘keep’ horses as pets or livestock. For example, Premarin, a drug used to treat the symptoms of menopause and osteoporosis, is produced from pregnant mare’s urine, which means these mares are kept pregnant year after year. Furthermore, as Animal Liberation describe,

For the six months when a mare’s urine is most concentrated with oestrogen, pregnant mares are tethered in stalls not much bigger than their bodies. They can’t take more than a step or two forwards or backwards, turn around or even lie down comfortably. (2014, p. 1)

The extent to which humans have used horses for human gain throughout Western history is so pervasive that almost without exception, there has been inherent costs to the horses to the extent they have not
been free and safe. As the examples here have shown, often human contact has come at the cost of horse’s lives without any crime being seen to be committed. The question that must be asked is: how are horses treated in equine assisted practices and if it is different to the dominant discourse of othering and control for the servicing of human needs and pleasures, what accounts for these differences?

2.4 Ecofeminism

One aim of critical social work is to link the personal to the political (Pease & Fook 1999) and to avoid blaming the person for issues, which have a socio-political basis. For example, the inequalities women face in a number of arenas including the long established discourse around women having a closer connection to nature, and therefore further from culture, means women can be personally disadvantaged due to dominant gender biased discourses (Plumwood 1993, p. 34). It is further argued that the same patriarchal values and structures, which have oppressed women for years, have also worked to oppress nature (Plumwood 1993). In particular, Plumwood explains the dualism as a,

Master model of human identity: women’s alignment with nature has been matched by the development of an elite masculine identity centring around distance from the feminine, from nature as necessity, from such ‘natural’ areas in human life as reproduction, and around control, domination and inferiorisation of the natural sphere. (1993, p. 34)

Furthermore, ecofeminist theory has influenced the focus on dichotomising whilst advocating for another way of being with people, animals and environment, which does not objectify (Warren 1996). An ecofeminist approach is interested in how patriarchal ideology and structures inform the positioning of humans and animals both in material culture as well as in language. Post-structural feminism adds to this body of work highlighting how patriarchal has dominated discourses are informed by power and privilege (Ife & Tesoriero 2006). Feminist thinking on the whole has historically questioned the impact of patriarchal power on the lives of women, and continues today to broaden out to consider other forms of oppression experienced by other groups including non-dominant males, people with disabilities and non-human animals for example (Plumwood 1993).

Interestingly as noted by Zimmerman, a challenge to dualistic thinking is expressed and explained as,

May well be, however, that this is a more integrated awareness, one that promises to harmonise in a non-regressive way the individual with community, male with female, humanity with nature,
cannot be achieved without passing through the stage of dualistic and dissociative ego-consciousness. (Cited in Oelschlaeger 1992, p. 254)

This research is also influenced by a perspective, which acknowledges a more general link between person and environment and uses ecology as a metaphor for social workers to seek sustainable long term change across the person and their environment (Healy 2005). From here it is argued intersectionality is organising and positioning species and social groups, described as ‘intersectionality emerges from social special practices of privileging and othering that shapes human and non human animal positionalities and relations.’ (Hovoroka, 2012, p.877) Therefore research has been approached from an ecofeminist approach, which sees a connection between models of ecosystems, ecology and feminism and involves the development of a viewpoint, which is not based on models of domination and oppression (Warren 1996; Plumwood 1996). Ecofeminism has stemmed from systems theory but addresses the limitations of this theory by identifying conceptual dichotomies as key to maintaining the causes of social and environmental domination and exploitation (Warren 1996). In particular, ecofeminism renders visible how dichotomies are,

Oppositional and value laden categories of masculine and feminine, mind and body, public and private, and nature and society, which in turn rest on and uphold a basically Cartesian, atomistic worldview that has characterised Western thought. Accompanying this is a sense of psychological splitting, an existential isolation in which people tend to lose touch with their own value and internal coherence as well as that of human and nonhuman others through processes of objectification. (Warren 1996, p. 2)

In the next section I develop my argument for multispecies practice with animals by describing the historical relationship between humans and horses. I argue that there is a persistent pattern of treating horses as objects for human purposes. The integrity of my research rests within its animal rights stance, which affords the opportunity to question the nature of what it means to be a living being. This necessarily involves consideration of whether or not it is ethical to work with animals in the first place and if so what is needed to avoid exploitative relationships.
2.5 History of animal assisted practices and benefits of equine assisted practice

The history of AAT has been shaped by several key figures in the field, with the earliest well-documented experiment in this area took place in England in the late eighteenth century at The York Retreat, where the internal courtyards were ‘stocked with various small domestic animals’ (Serpell, in Fine, 2010, p.25). It has also been said that AAT started in World War 2, “when a Yorkshire terrier named Smoky that had already served in combat missions alongside his human partner Corporal William Wynne, visited injured soldiers in a military hospital’ (DeMello, 2012, p.205) In more recent developments, Levinson, ‘a psychotherapist who is considered by many as the father of animal assisted therapy’ (Fine 2010, p.6) is considered to be a leader in developing the field. Levinson went beyond the idea that animals are a symbolic disguise for things humans were afraid to confront in therapy; he saw non-human animals as integral to wellbeing (Serpell in Fine, 2010, p.27).

Historically, other disciplines and cultures have worked with animals and remarked on their transformative work with humans (Fine 2010; DeMello 2010). Animals have been used in adults and children’s stories and folklore, whilst early hunter-gatherers announced the correlation between human health and animals believed to be from the supernatural power of animals and animal’s spirits (Fine 2010). Socially the human animal bond has been acknowledged throughout time. For example, the first records of this bond include a human skeleton from 12,000 years ago, which was found in northern Israel holding a puppy. Since then worldwide organisations such as Pet Partners (previously known as the Delta Society), founded in 1980 have mainstreamed animal assisted practice offering voluntary programs and training for handlers and their dogs (Morrison 2007). At the present time there are at least three universities in America, which are teaching on the human animal bond (DeMello 2010). It is clear that although it is a new field, animal assisted practices will either bring social work practitioners along with the knowledge or we will be left behind. DeMello (2012, p. 7) discusses this important issue, ‘as humans, dependence on non-human animals increases and as our relationship with them changes in the twenty-first century, not examining this relationship within the context of academia seems bizarre’.

An historical overview of the relationship between horses and humans seeks to provide an insight into the discourses that may be operating in the field of equine assisted practice. Before the invention of wheel making, the horse/human partnership was the ‘first truly notable innovation to impact the spread of culture, language, and transportation’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 6). Since this period the horse-human relationship has changed over time to reinforce the dominant culture of capitalism and neoliberal ideas (DeMello 2012; Wallace & Pease 2011). Capitalism refers to,
An economic system based on private ownership of property, competition in the production and distribution of goods and services, and the maximisation of profits for those who own the means of production (sic) (the factories, land, machines and tools used to make products). (DeMello 2012, p. 272)

The idea of capitalism begs the question, what does this mean for animals whom are considered the property of human owners? DeMello (2012, p. 272) argues, ‘human and animal oppression have escalated with the rise of capitalism as an economic system’. In addition to capitalism, neoliberalism has significantly impacted on social work practice and ‘the literature suggests that the impact of neoliberalism ranges across broad structural and organisational frameworks, from policy design and process to consideration of values and constructs of practice’ (Wallace & Pease 2011, p. 134). This then poses the question under a neoliberal regime, how do non-humans fit into the idea of moving social welfare to the community and who takes responsibility for the rights and inclusion of animals in social work practice?

There is however a change emerging within natural horsemanship methods which have very much influenced the multispecies, anti-oppressive aims of the research. Resnick (2005) explains how she began to watch horses in the wild and how this informed her natural horsemanship methods, from watching a new born foal and noticing that at birth horses are equipped to respond to movement. Natural horsemanship is described as,

A process of training horses through their instinctive response to movement. A dominant horse is one that understands how to influence another horse with movement and body language. The horse with the most ability to influence the entire heard is the leader. In a stampede, a lead horse can turn chaos into order, creating a percussion of hooves as unified as a drum roll. (Resnick 2005, p. 159) Horses are beginning to be acknowledged for the intelligent beings that they are, as Hill (2006, p. 131) writes, ‘horses are said to have a memory second only to an elephant’s. If true, the horse is in distinguished company. Horses rarely forget lessons, good or bad. They remember past associations with alarming clarity and for long periods of time’. Recognition of embodied relationships are evident in recent literature, as reported by Equine Psychotherapy Institute founder Kirby who writes,

Much of the potency of what horses offered me in relationship was an experience that was deeply located in my breath, senses, and energetic waves of experience, feelings, and what I now refer to as ‘presence’. Presence supports a change in my experience, the awareness of a separate self, observing the world loses its duality, and there is a pervasive experience of oneness of being, with the horse, the ‘field’ and myself. (2010, p. 64)
Discovering there has been some research in the field of equine assisted practice outlining the benefits to humans is a troubling construct, as it appears to place animals in a position to be ‘serving’ humans needs. In a study on equine assisted psychotherapy with young people, the findings showed ‘caregivers reported statistically significant positive change in behavioural dysfunction’ (Suarez 2005, p. 61). The above study emphasised ‘with a little redirection, clients can learn to focus and productively deal with frustration while in session. This research shows that these skills seem to transfer to practical areas of life, such that primary caregivers notice a change in the day-to-day life of adolescents participating in EAP (Equine Assisted Psychotherapy)’ (Suarez 2005, p. 61). In another study on equine assisted learning, the benefits to a group of school children who had been diagnosed with ‘emotional disorder’ (Tetreault 2005, p. 60) were described in the following way, ‘students improved individually in the area of behaviour management by an average 18.4%. Overall progress for the group, with the respect of behaviour management was an average of 34%. This progress was statistically significant’ (Tetreault 2005, p. 60). However, once again in this study, there was no mention of benefits to the horses, effectively constructing horses as invisible others.

It is evident from an exploration of the field of equine assisted practice literature that there is an implicit assumption that the horse’s role is one of service to people. Inter-relatedly, there is an unquestioned acceptance of the consequent othering of horses as aids for therapists to help clients (DeMello 2012, p. 259). To understand how the relating with horses can be recreated in this relatively new field of practice, an analysis of the dominant philosophical and ethical premises is presented in the following sections of the literature review.

2.6 Language and discourses

To the extent that language gains its legitimacy from the prevailing social norms, which serve the dominant groups in society, ‘language contributes to the oppression and exploitation of animals’ (Stibbe 2001, p. 145). Furthermore, the modernist paradigm of knowledge is premised upon the language of rationalism, including economic rationalism and scientism, objectivism, and imperialism (Safran Foer 2009; Plumwood 2001; Ryan 2011).

To the extent animals are represented by humans as objects for the use by humans, whatever forms the textual representation takes, then dominant social interests are being exercised. This is made possible by the privileging of patriarchal forms of knowledge, which devalue the eco-centric, relational and subjective nature of knowledge creation and use (Plumwood 1993; Smith 1990). As McLaren and Tadeu da Silva argue,
Knowledge is always indexical to the context of the knower and the known. In other words, knowledge is always implicated in relations of power and power is distributed laterally and historically, which is to say, unequally among groups differentiated by race/ethnicity, gender and class [and species]. (1993, p. 72)

The oppressive effects of dominant modernist ideas become possible through a range of false logics and mis-ethics (Ross 2014, p. 4) where knowledge is legitimated as an objective, rational and thus not to be questioned activity (Palmer & Ross 2014, p. 28). Plumwood identifies one of the irrationalities of rationalism as the creation of dualisms which,

Is a process in which power forms identity, one which distorts both sides of what it splits apart, the master and the slave, the coloniser and the colonised, the sadist and the masochist, the egoist and the self-abnegating altruist, the masculine and the feminise, human and nature. (1993, p. 32)

Yet as Plumwood writes, dichotomising in language does not render either position more power and the problem of dualism cannot be resolved with a reversal of the dualism. The entrapping nature of power dynamics based on the discourse around dualisms is demonstrated by Plumwood’s claim that,

The extent that women’s ‘closeness to nature’ is mainly a product of their powerlessness in and exclusion from culture, and from access to technological means of separating from and mastering nature, affirming of these qualities, which are the products of powerlessness, will not provide a genuine alternative. Rather it reactively preserves and maintains the original dualism in the character of what is now affirmed. (1993 p. 32)

This discussion of the often undeclared link between knowledge and power also requires a consideration of the nature of being for it is the failure to regard horses as equal beings, the dualism of human versus animal, which forms the basis upon which their oppression rests.

2.7 Being with as an ethical and rights based connection

Once the subjective, socially constructed nature of all knowledge is recognised (Pease & Fook 1999, p. 9), it can more readily be contested for the power-drenched activity that it comprises in all circumstances and relationships. As Foltz argues,

Heidegger’s thinking offers us the elements for an alternative understanding of ethics that is especially well suited to the task of finding better ways of getting along with other residents of this planet. (1993, p. 84)
Resnick describes an embodied, relational being with, a non-exploitative way of being with nature and animals as,

The desert taught me how to feel, first from the discomfort and then from the relief. From the relief there is an understanding of meditation. That space that comes between thoughts until thoughts disappear and are replaced by quiet solitude. In that space of suspended thought and appreciation for the smallest pleasures, in those moments I gained a perception of nature that connected me to the elements and an understanding of the animal mind. (2005, p. 32)

Zimmerman explains that ‘being does not name an entity of any sort, but rather the presencing of entities’ (cited in Oelschlawger 1992, p. 255). The presencing of being is something, which non-human animals can bring to encounters with humans and particularly to social work practice and equine assisted therapy. For example, according to Zimmerman, Heidegger was,

Concerned with the relationship between being and human existence (Dasein) ... [where] “being” (Sein), [is] understood in the active sense of the infinitive “to be,” [which] means the self-revealing or self-manifesting of beings (Seienden). (cited in Oelschlawger 1992, p. 103)

Therefore, the ‘being’ which the research refers to is about an ethical and rights based connection between each other as humans and our co-species, in that animals are sought out to be with, rather than to use or receive a service from. In particular, it refers to being with horses in a way which has little emphasis on taking or humans receiving, and otherwise acknowledges,

Language is a gift that imposes on us the ‘supreme obligation’ of bearing witness to beings. Bearing witness involves ‘letting beings be’, which can mean an active engagement to reveal them, but it can also mean letting beings alone to pursue their own course without human interference. (Zimmerman, cited in Oelschlawger 1992, p. 103)

On a continuum of non-exploitative relating, ‘being’ and ‘being with’ are quite different to objectifying the relationships and invisibilising of horses, which may be operating in the field of equine assisted practice. According to Zimmerman, being and language are linked and because animals do not have a similar historical-linguistic world to humans, they cannot reveal themselves in the human world (cited in Oelschlawger 1992, p. 111). As a result, there is an unavoidable privileging of human language and voices unless a different understanding of the nature of being is promoted which goes beyond linguistic communication. Without their own voices within the world of human language, non-humans are very vulnerable to exploitation as explained by Stibbe,
Animals are represented in language not only as different but also as inferior, the two conditions necessary for oppression. (2001, p. 148)

There are ways to offer a mutual relationship with another being which are respectful and do not depend on a common language (Karremann 2013; Stibbe 2012). Furthermore, the next section will argue how, with an approach coming from the deepest respect, a connection, which goes beyond the spoken word, is possible. It is argued that it is possible to meet as co-species and to create another layer of understanding and connection to be with non-humans in non-exploitative relationships.

2.8 A relational rights based ethic

The relational, contextual and power based nature of the epistemology and ontology, which underpins the research, presumes that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann 1967). Further, crucially, reality is co-constructed by our co-species within the natural realm (Plumwood 2000, p. 285). Deep ecologists describe this as ‘dependent co-arising’ where I concur fully with Macy who writes,

I have been deeply inspired by the Buddha’s teaching of dependent co-arising. It fills me with a sense of connection and mutual responsibility with all beings. Helping me understand the non-hierarchical and self-organising nature of life, it is the philosophic grounding of all my work. (2012, p. 29)

German philosopher, Buber argues that reality exists in ‘the between’, which refers to the space that is neither the human or the animal but where the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’ meet and are present with each other without force,

The I-Thou encounter unveils a possibility of human existence which had been very frequently overlooked. He called this possibility genuine dialogue between persons. (cited in Gordon 2001, p. 116)

This idea of being within dialogue (Buber, cited in Morgan & Guilherme 2012, p. 189), which may well be beyond spoken human language, can involve horses in social work practice which is mutual and anti-oppressive. Central to this way of being with horses is the need for humans to divest of our ‘isms’ ranging from anthropocentrism to medicalism. These ‘isms’ are strands of cultural imperialism and as Young writes, this,

Involves the universalisation of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm … the dominant group [for example, humans] construct the differences which some
groups [for example, animals] exhibit as lack and negation. These groups become marked as Other. (1990, p. 59)

The oppression of non-dominant groups can be linked to the environment and natural world where non-human animals are,

... Both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible. As remarkable, deviant [non-human] beings, the culturally imperialised are stamped with an essence. The stereotypes confine them to a nature which is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which thus cannot easily be denied. (Young 1990, p. 59)

The mutual and therefore non-hierarchical and anti-oppressive forms of relating with horses valued in the research includes the place in which animals connect in relationships described as where they ‘dwell’ (Zimmerman, cited in Oelschlawger 1992, p. 112) with humans. For instance,

From our encounters with cats, dogs and horses, we abstract the idea of ‘animalness’; from animals, plants and trees we abstract the idea of ‘life’, of ‘living beings’; and then, from living beings, minerals and so on, we abstract the idea that which every entity has in common – their extantness or being. (Mulhall 2005, p. 8)

From a broader philosophical context Derrida’s account of the animal is significant for the research in terms of his deconstruction of animals and what it means to define ourselves and other non-humans. In his writing Derrida claims the question of living and of the living animal has always been his most important question (Guerlac 2012, p. 700). Derrida most significantly implies that previous theorists have spoken of the animal to assist in defining humans, however this has resulted in exploitation and domination over the animal (Guerlac 2012). Derrida’s notion of the animal as already an equal species with humans is the principal ethical position adopted in the research.

Further, Derrida writes about the ‘multiplicity of becomings and relational structures between humans and animal’ (cited in Calcaro 2008, p. 142). When expanding on this idea, Derrida poses the question,

Do not ‘human beings’ belong to this multiplicity of beings and relations? Are we to believe that human beings are some-how exempt from the play of differences and forces, of becomings and relations? Are not ‘human beings’ sliding constantly along a series of differences, including those that are thought to separate human from animal, animal from plant, and life in general from death? (cited in Calcaro 2008, p. 142)
The section has explored the connection between humans and non-humans through an ecofeminist, ontology of being to acknowledge the unequal and possibly exploitative connection humans have with our co-species. This connection is inextricably linked to the ethical standpoint humans will take when working with horses which in turn is inextricably linked to power.

2.9 Summary

The literature review described the influence of critical social work in understanding the use of language and the dualistic bias in discourses relating to non-human animals in the service of humans. Critical social work theory and ontology is one approach, which could begin to broach the subject of non-human animals in practice. It is suggested there are limitations to the way horses have been considered as having inherent value and rights to be treated as equals in equine assisted practice. In addition, critical social work ideas and ethics and their limitations have been identified as these inter-relate with the literature on speciesism. The literature review provided a space for a discussion of social work practice with horses and the gaps in creating a multispecies ethical basis. Through the adoption of an ecofeminist approach it was shown how animals have been constructed from the dominant culture, which is premised on oppression of non-human animals. Being with as a relational ontology has been outlined as an alternative way of interacting with non-human animals through an embodied rights based ethic. The literature review has highlighted the multispecies considerations that could contribute toward an alternative approach to engaging as equals with all animals. In turn this could challenge the current assumptions and discourses that may be underpinning the field of equine assisted practice.
3.0 The Research Methodology

Human beings are ‘earthly’ not simply because they are blessed with language, but because they occupy it in such a way that through it they can mark the distance between the earth and sky. (Shalow 2006, p. 95)

*I believe spoken or written words do not get across the message needed. Sometimes the message is a feeling translated into words. The simplicity of this changeover, feelings to words, is significant as the feeling is often lost to some extent. When non-human animals then feel how do we, human-animals, understand them? (Menyweather 2016)*

3.1 Introduction

In the social sciences, methodology refers to the philosophical, and hence the political, framework for the research (Lather 1991; Denzin & Lincoln 2000) within which one or more research methods are employed to explore the research topic. Discursive analysis is the theoretical approach for this research, which entails a critical perspective with emphasis on an eco-feminist understanding of knowledge, ethics, power and how people, and other sentient beings, are constructed and co-create social reality (Brookfield 2005; Fook 2012; Plumwood 1993; Ryan 2011). Consequently, there are significant elements the methodology for the research will include to ensure it is consistent with a critical eco-feminist theoretical and multispecies ethical orientation.

A discursive analytical frame aims to allow an exploration of the research issue, drawing upon recognition of the socially constructed, characteristic of helping in contemporary socio-political contexts. Critical discourse analysis will offer an approach to unearth complex, partial, contradictory and contested knowledge (Lather & Smithies 1997) In particular, the textual representations of animals in the area of equine assisted practice will be explored. The multispecies ethic and emphasis will highlight the functioning of power in order to understand further what this conveys about multispecies justice, care and respect that is evident in the texts being researched.

In its historical origins, the defining feature of critical research was its ability to politicise knowledge claims and in so doing, expose the ways dominance and violence are perpetuated in society (Stanley 1990; Stanley & Wise 1993). Specifically, as argued in the literature review, there is a modernist, dualistic ontological and epistemological premise to social work’s lack of regard for animals. Social work, as with any area of practice and human activity, is deeply influenced by the predominant prevailing ‘social constructs’, which are commonly taken for granted (Fook 2012, p. 105). As such, an exploration of the
selected texts ‘might signal some of the ways we have constructed our meaning to preserve particular practices or structures’ (Fook 2012, p. 105) in relation to non-human animals.

Conducting a critical discourse analysis of the selected literature will enable an appreciation of the extent to which this relatively new field of practice might possibly be othering and perpetuating dualistic relationships with our co-species (Plumwood 1993). In turn, this focus will allow an understanding of ways in which the texts selected for the research accept modernist, dominating and dualistic notions of being, or offer instead constructionist, dialogical and emancipatory understandings. The implications of the research results will be outlined for critical social work, centring on the extent of multispecies discourses in the selected equine assisted practice literature.

Finally, as the researcher is always socially situated and to some extent invested in the power dynamics and discourses, which are being studied (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000, p. 5), an aspect of the methodological approach will be reflective (Ross 2007, p. 488). It is imperative that critical reflection, in particular, is part of the research methodology. Critical reflection refers to a process of ‘standing back’ and seeing the issues from another perspective (Fook & Gardner 2007, p. 10).

After a discussion of the theoretical premises for the methodology, the next sub-section outlines the method of critical discourse analysis to be used on selected texts used in the field. What constitutes the data is also explained and the sub-techniques used to access, organise and explore the data are described. Critical discourse analysis will constitute the main orientation to a key element of the data analysis as well as the discussion of the results. This is about having congruency between the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research.

3.2 A discursive methodology

*There are changes occurring in my interpretation of language. Starting to look at the finer details, or just exactly what is spoken, is one way to understand human’s intentions and feelings behind words. When I say ‘use horses’ for example, I feel something about horses that is very different from saying ‘be with horses’. When Pearl stands in front of me and looks me in the eyes with her ears forward, this embodied communication is something else entirely different from spoken language.* (Menyweather 2016)

The theoretical underpinnings for a discursive methodology are explored in this section to foster a consciousness raising orientation to the research. My aim is to challenge the status quo and raise consciousness on how dominant relations affect how animals are engaged in equine assisted practice. It will be shown how this researchers social positioning holds a consistency with the relational nature of
being, a constructionist nature of reality and a dialogical nature of emancipatory practice, knowledge
creation and use.

Discourses are described by Foucault (cited in Parker & The Bolton Discourse Network 1999, p. 70) as
‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.’ Gee (2005) describes discourse as
combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using
various symbols, tools and objects to enact a particular socially recognised identity (p.21). There is an
undertone of observation, watching and inquiring implied by the term analysis, where, ‘discourse analysis
is always a movement from context to language and from language to context’ (Gee 2005, p. 14). Critical
discourse analysis (CDA) extends this definition in a way that is relevant for this research. For example, Le &
Le claim,

In an attempt to describe, interpret and explain the relationship between the form and function of
language, CDA aims at unearthing the intricate relationship between power, dominance and social
inequality in different social groups. (cited in Le, Le & Short 2009, p. 14)

In other words, Gee and Handford suggest that,

CDA is concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se,
but with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. (2012, p. 616)

Critical discourse analysis shifts away from the narrow focus which discourse analysis has on text alone
and enables the researcher to look deeper into the phenomenon being studied to incorporate and
acknowledge the role of socio-cultural influences in how language is shaped and used in specific
socio-historical contexts and relationships of power/knowledge. Bourdieu suggests the researcher asks
questions such as ‘what is a text?’ and ‘who decides this?’ (Le, Le & Short 2009, pp. 38-39). Furthermore,
Bourdieu’s work debates that subjects, concepts and words themselves are social and therefore socially
pre-constructed and socially constituted (Le, Le & Short 2009, pp. 38-39).

Foucault has a special place in critical discourse analysis because of his analysis of power and which helps
to ‘unmask’ discourses (Le, Le & Short 2009, p. 6). Foucault claims that power is discursive and relational
as well as indirect in structures of society such that it is about the exercise of influence between people
and as such can be located in language and other markers of human activity (Mills 2004). Foucault’s
extension of discourse to include texts and the organisation of knowledge and worldviews (Le, Le & Short
2009, p. 6) allows an interrogation of the intricate links between knowledge, power and subjectivities.
Fairclough (1995, p. 23) defines critical discourse analysis as a ‘framework for studying connections
between language, power and ideology’. The explicitly recognised element of social influences in
discourses gives credence to the exploration of the links between subjectivities, including non-human,
cultural and structural dynamics of power (Thompson 2011, p. 24). Thompson argues that within these layers of discourses are claims to knowledge and power which can be oppressive which he defines as,

Inhuman or degrading treatment of individuals or groups [and other sentient beings]; hardship and injustice brought about by the dominance of one group over another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power. It often involves disregarding the rights of an individual or group [and animal’s rights and experiences] and is thus a denial of citizenship [and beingness of animals]. (2011, p. 23)

The discursive notion of power within social relations allows critical discourse analysis to be described as social action, which seeks to challenge dominant discourses as a key aspect of changing unequal and unjust social and inter-species relations. The exploration of the discursive nature of equine assisted practice will illuminate the constructed nature of practices and relationships (Berger & Luckman 1967) and seek to unsettle thereby the possibly unquestioned dominant constructions and related discourses. In this way, by beginning to question and interrogate dominant discourses, which may be operating in the area of equine assisted practice, the consciousness raising of these constructions will commence.

3.3 Fairclough’s CDA method

For the purpose of the research, Fairclough’s (1995, p. 24) method of critical discourse analysis will be used to create the research material where the emphasis is upon ‘discourse within the social reproduction of relations of domination’. To understand to what extent equine practice involves emancipatory multispecies ethics, this method looks at the discursive ways in which the chosen texts build language around the orders of discourse and oppression (Fairclough 1995, p. 24). In particular, integration of the three stages of Fairclough’s (1995, p. 23) model ‘(a) Analysis of text, (b) Analysis of processes of text production, consumption and distribution, and (c) Sociocultural analysis of the discursive event’ will be used to create the research material set. At the same time the presentation of the research material in the next section constitutes the beginning steps of critically analysing the discursive practices of the selected textbooks. This analysis is also described as bringing together three analytical traditions to include,

- The micro concerns evident in linguistics/text
- The meso interpretation as the social production of texts
- The macro-analysis and association with social theory. (Jacobs 2006, p. 141)

A brief explanation of the three components of Fairclough’s CDA method is provided at the beginning of each of the three sections, which present the corresponding research material in the next chapter. The main task of the presentation and initial description of the research material is to systematically build a
layered account of the language used in the selected texts. This allows for greater depth of understanding and scaffolding of the complexity that can occur between language and culture. The research material will then be used to analyse for the frequency of language and discursive practices within the arguments presented by the authors.

3.4 Reflective component

To ensure the research approach has a trustworthiness and integrity (Garman, cited in Smyth, Hattam & Shacklock 1997, p. 31), it will include a reflective component as part of the CDA method. The idea of researcher reflection when analysing the selected equine assisted practice literature recognises that social structures and power relations are read ‘off’ texts by the researcher (Le, Le & Short 2009, p. 73). Le, Le and Short (2009, p. 71) argue that there is a need for the researcher to bring an awareness to the research of their personal values and beliefs, theories and life experiences. Further, it is important they understand how all this affects aspects of the research.

Criticisms in the field of discourse analysis relate precisely to the lack of researcher reflection as it is argued that ‘political and social ideologies are projected onto the data rather than being revealed through the data’ (Le, Le & Short 2009, p. 10). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Alvesson and Skoldberg claim in relation to the limitations of objectivist approaches to research, there is,

An ambiguous, unstable, context-dependent character [to] language, [a] dependence of both observations and data on interpretation and theory (interpretation-free, theory-neutral facts do not in principle, exist) and the political-ideological character of the social sciences. (2000, p. 1)

They describe reflection as a methodological approach, which is,

... Above all a question of recognising fully the notoriously ambivalent relation of the researcher’s text to the realities studied. Reflection means interpreting one’s own interpretations, looking at one’s own perspectives from other perspectives, and turning a self-critical eye onto one’s authority as interpreter and author. (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2000, p. vii)

In addition, reflection can be described as ‘learning from experience by being able to (re-) examine the fundamental basis on which it is interpreted’ (Fook 2012, p. 196). Specifically, critical reflection will be used to enable the researcher to follow key principles, including challenging domination of animals in the literature in three areas; external structures, social relations and personal constructions, and recognising multiple and diverse constructions (Fook 2012, p. 47). Critical reflection allows the researcher to re-construct and re-develop practice and theory in the field of equine assisted practice, ‘particularly in
relation to how power relations and structures can be changed to be more emancipatory’ (Fook 2012, p. 49). In particular, I will ask myself the questions of, how did I influence the situation? what were my assumptions and values? and what does my experience imply about new theory I want to develop? (Fook & Gardner 2007, p. 172).

Several points can be raised regarding the limitations of critical discourse analysis as a research methodology. A criticism is that insufficient attention is given to the non-linguistic aspects of discourses, for example, emotion or activity (Le, Le & Short 2009, p. 70). This is significant for the current research if the multispecies orientation is to be fully realised. An unanswered question in the literature relevant here is ‘how does the research address the non-human language of animals so their realities can be appreciated?’ It is anticipated that inclusion of ethical practices as integral to the discourses being studied in the selected texts will provide an opportunity to raise consciousness of the presence or absence of harmful, assumptions and norms in how interactions with horses are conducted.

3.5 The source of the research material

To create the research material for the research, an extensive search of the literature within the field of equine assisted practice was undertaken and generated a number of articles that describe the outcomes for people who engage in equine assisted practice. However, no specific literature on the theoretical & ethical orientations of practice, or the training of practitioners could be sourced at the time. In addition, due to the length it took for this research to be completed, there may be new literature available which is not included due to the rapid growth of this field.

To obtain relevant research material, four texts which have influenced animal assisted practice in general and equine assisted practice more specifically have been selected. Due to how small the field of equine assisted practice is relatively speaking, two out of the four of the texts chosen are not specific to equine practice and include other animals as well when referring to animal assisted practice. Two of those are *Animal Assisted Psychotherapy: Theory Issues and Practice* (Parish-Plass 2013) and *Animal Assisted Therapy* (Fine 2010). These texts are the most recently published and well regarded texts on the topic of animal assisted interventions and are referred to within The Equine Psychotherapy Institute’s training manual and The University of Denver’s postgraduate course on the human animal connection. In terms of specific and popular contributions from the field of equine assisted practice, *Harnessing the Power of Equine Assisted Counselling: Adding Animal Assisted Therapy to Your Practice* (Trotter 2011) and *Walking the Way of the Horse* (Hallberg 2008) will be analysed. Both texts are referred to by The Equine Psychotherapy Institute in their training.
A close reading of each book (hereafter referred to as ‘texts’) will highlight themes, including the language/words/discourses, which are used to describe equine assisted practice. In particular, the analyses will highlight discourses and mechanisms of power, specifically dualisms and othering.

In addition, each text has an explicit purpose and target group outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Author and Purpose of Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Text</th>
<th>Purpose of the text</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serpell, Coppinger, Fine &amp; Peralta in Fine, A (ed.) 2010, <em>Handbook on animal assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice</em></td>
<td>‘I wanted to develop a book that not only imparted a strong theoretical overview, but also provided clinicians, researchers and scholars as well as all others interested in AAI (Animal Assisted Interventions) with the (sic) a clearer understanding of the value of the human-animal bond as well as potential methods for application’ (Fine 2010, p. xix).</td>
<td>Chapter 23 Welfare consideration in therapy and assistance animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg, L 2008, <em>Walking the way of the horse: Exploring the power of the horse-human relationship</em></td>
<td>‘To introduce interested individuals to the field of Equine Facilitated Mental Health and to offer those already practicing in the field a resource to help guide their own explorations. To help expand current thinking about the importance of the connection to the natural world’ (Hallberg 2008, p. xxvi).</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg, L 2008, <em>Walking the way of the horse: Exploring the power of the horse-human relationship</em></td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Chapter 10 Ethical considerations for EFMH/ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish-Plass, N ed. 2013, <em>Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy</em></td>
<td>‘First and foremost, I would like to reach AAP (Animal Assisted Psychotherapy) therapists in Israel and abroad. Second, I hope this book will serve as a textbook for students of AAP studying in academic institutions’ (Parish-Plass 2013, p. xxii).</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table illustrates each author’s aim to provide information to readers about their text relating to human and non-human animal relationships in AAP and EAP. The audience for the texts are a broad group of anticipated readers including clinicians/ therapists/practitioners, students, researchers and scholars.

### How the research material will be analysed

The analysis will be undertaken using critical discourse analysis to ensure congruency between what constitutes the research material and the organisation of the discussion of the material. Therefore, after the material is collected for the critical discourse analysis, the discussion will involve using Flyvbjerg’s (2001) schema. Flyvbjerg’s (2001) work will be used to extend Fairclough’s CDA by enabling a values and power oriented set of questions, that highlight values and power dynamics in order to reveal their discursive character. As Fairclough & Wodak claim, discourse constitutes society and culture; discourse does ideological work, and, discourse is historical (cited in Le, Le & Shorts 2009, p. 8).

Furthermore, because discourse is a form of social action (Fairclough & Wodak, cited in Le, Le & Shorts 2009), this research can be considered as a performative text (Denzin 1997) where the analysis of discourses within the selected texts on equine assisted practice is itself a political activity. Thus, the research discussion calls attention to who might be winning and who might be losing according to the material analysed (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 148).

In the analysis of the research material, the following questions will be asked:
Where are we going with the field of equine assisted practice?

Who wins and who loses and by what mechanisms of power? This question is asking who gains power and who is oppressed.

Is (the outcome) it desirable?

What should be done? (Flyvbjerg 2001)

The current dominant and speciesist discourses within society form the backdrop for these discussion questions. Critical social work ideas, augmented by ecofeminist multispecies ethics will be used to illustrate in particular what the research contributes to the field of EAP/AAP and the implications for social work with non-human animals. The Flyvbjerg (2001) questions enable a values and power oriented discussion to explore the value of multispecies ethics and practices whereby horses and humans engage in mutual, non-exploitative relationships.

3.6 Ethics and researcher positionality

The feminism approach to this research informs the reflective element to ensure transparency and that the researcher’s own biases are addressed. According to Olesen feminist research has ‘opened discussion of critical epistemological issues, the researcher’s characteristics and relationships to the research participants’ (cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2013, p. 268). In addition, a multidimensional approach is also used to ensure the researcher is not seen as the sole expert. In so far as the content adds to the material, this recognises (sic) both the embodied aspects and the multiplicity of researcher and participant perspectives (Olesen, cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2013, p. 273). Therefore, small reflective pieces have been used throughout this research to present the perspectives and origins of the research from the researcher’s perspective. In addition, an ethical perspective has been maintained by attending regular research supervision meetings, as well as keeping within the research purpose, and what the research material will allow the researcher to claim.

The positionality of the researcher as a human animal runs the risk of contributing to the research problem given the researcher is a human speaking about the exploitation of non-human animals. This is an ethical dilemma, which warrants further discussion here. It is important this bias is challenged and is done so in this research through the researcher’s reflections and final comments. There is a real ethical dilemma in how to talk about the voicelessness of non-human animals as a human. However, the need for non-human animals to have advocates and a voice within human culture is deemed paramount to challenging the existing discourses and cultural norms. Without humans recognising and using their
power to raise consciousness of the injustices towards non-human animals it is possible to remain part of
the problem, contributing to rather than offering an alternative to speciesism.

The reflective process occurs alongside all stages of the research whereby the researcher maintained a
separate document to record relevant thoughts, experiences and memories. These researcher reflections
are located at the beginning of chapters. Salient researcher experiences were also recorded and placed
within the ‘Introduction’ and ‘Conclusion’. Finally, a reflective narrative is placed in the ‘Epilogue’, which
provides a final researcher reflection on the deeply challenging ethical nature of undertaking the research
as a parallel activity to witnessing speciesism and seeking to be non-exploitative in my relationships with
non-human animals as a social worker and citizen.

3.7 Summary

In this section I have outlined critical discourse analysis, in particular the specific method of Fairclough’s (1995) three inter-related layers of analysis for creating the research material. The reflective component of the research has been outlined to include the researcher’s reflections as part of the research material. The four textual sources research material have been outlined and consist of the five key texts. Finally, the chapter has outlined how the research material will be analysed and the key ethical considerations of the research including the challenge of researcher positionality. The next chapter presents the research material that was obtained by applying Fairclough’s (1995) CDA to the selected texts from the EAP/AAT field.
4.0 Data Collection and the Research Material

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research material, which has been obtained by undertaking a critical discourse analysis of the selected texts. It is presented in three sections: the micro layer, the meso layer and the macro layer. Tables illustrate the research material within each layer and corresponding summaries outline further details to explain each section.

At the beginning of this chapter is a presentation of the purpose and intended audience of the chosen texts as explained by the respective authors. Table 2 below lists basic details to explain the language in the texts such as the name of the text, the author/editor of each text and also provides an account of the intended audience and purpose of each text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Year of Text</th>
<th>Author/Editor (credentials)</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Evident Purpose</th>
<th>Stated Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animal Assisted Therapy (3rd edn), 2010</strong></td>
<td>Aubrey Fine, Editor, PHD Psychologist, Works in private practice within animal assisted therapy in America.</td>
<td>Practitioners: Persons who want to begin or improve EAP/AAT practice Trainers/Teachers: e.g. EPIA and DU, Royal Guide Dogs Association.</td>
<td>Improve practitioner knowledge and practice. To act as a resource to inform trainers and function as a required text for students.</td>
<td>‘I wanted to develop a book that not only imparted a strong theoretical overview, but also provided clinicians, researchers and scholars as well as all others interested in AAI (Animal Assisted Interventions) with the (sic) a clearer understanding of the value of the human-animal bond as well as potential methods for application’ (Fine 2010, p. xix).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Walking the way of the horse: Exploring the power of the horse human relationship, 2008</strong></td>
<td>Leif Hallberg, Masters of counselling/psychology, Founder and director of the Esperanza centre (America).</td>
<td>New, and existing Mental Health practitioners.</td>
<td>Introduce individuals to the field of equine facilitated mental health education services, and offer those already practicing a resource to guide their own explorations. Inform current thinking about our connection to the natural world.</td>
<td>‘To introduce interested individuals to the field of Equine Facilitated Mental Health and to offer those already practicing in the field a resource to help guide their own explorations. To help expand current thinking about the importance of the connection to the natural world’ (Hallberg 2008, p. xxvi).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It can be noted from the above table that all but one of the authors are from the United States of America. Most authors hold credentials in the form of professional degrees in the helping professions of psychology, counseling or social work. Aubrey Fine is the only male author. All texts are intended for practitioners as the audience, usually with the purpose of gaining new knowledge or skills in the field of equine/animal assisted practice.

The next table outlines the selected chapters and the instated purposes, which include the introductory and/or ethics chapters from each text. The texts that do not have an introductory chapter or one, which claims to discuss ethics present, therefore have only one chapter in the micro analysis.

Table 3: Defining Chapter, Author and Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Chapter</th>
<th>Author (credentials)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine: Chapter 23</td>
<td>Co-authored with Editor: James Serpell, Raymond Coppinger, Aubrey Fine, Jose Peralta (all from various colleges and universities across America).</td>
<td>Highlight <strong>general welfare considerations</strong> for Animals used in Therapy, Service/Assistance Animals. Provide conclusions and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg: Introduction</td>
<td>Author: Leif Hallberg, (Masters of counselling/psychology, Founder and director of the Esperanza Centre).</td>
<td>Welcome readers to the text and explain general concepts and terms within the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg: Chapter 10</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>To highlight the findings of interviews with Equine Mental Health professionals and note the most significant ethical concern which was a <strong>lack of competence, awareness and safety guidelines</strong>. Focusing on <strong>professionalism, credentials and certification</strong> to combat this ethical concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish-Plass:</td>
<td>Editor: Parish-Plass, (Psychologist, studying masters in social work,</td>
<td><strong>Introduce</strong> what AAP is and outline how to use the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Parish-Plass: Chapter 9</td>
<td>Trotter: Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Specialist in the area of Animal Assisted Psychotherapy.</td>
<td>Co-authored with Editor: Parish-Plass, and D, Oren (PHD clinical psychology, educational psychology).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-authored</td>
<td>Highlight ethical concerns with involving animals in the therapeutic process for the animal, the client and the practitioner.</td>
<td>Introduction of the Author and background, describe what the book offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Trotter: Introduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the introductions were written by the author or editor. All but one ethics chapter was co-authored or guest edited. Trotter was the only editor/author to not co-write the ethics chapter and rely on guest editors. Hallberg was the only Author/Editor to write their own ethics chapter. The purpose for the ethics chapters varied and was different for each text, ranging from safety, to conduct concerns, to general welfare, to finally outline professionalism and credentials. There was ambiguity in the form of a general discourse around ethics and equine/animal assisted practice.
4.2 Micro layer of research material

It seems so removed from nature in my conditioned mind to be counting words and creating tables and numbers. Too specific and not holistic enough would be the critical social work critique. However, I think this is part of the problem, part of the dualisms that occur between women and nature, animals and technology. Knowing and having experienced nature and watched horses, a single detail in a blade of grass crushed or the way a human sighs, and whether the event occurs once or more frequently is extremely important to a horse for their safety, survival and general insight into the world. Why then is detail shamed and numbers seen as not inclusive from a critical social work approach? Yes, I agree numbers and finite details are only one small part of this research, although a forest must begin with a blade of grass from which it can multiply. (Menyweather 2016)

The micro layer of data creation is taken from Fairclough’s (1995, p. 97) three dimensional method of discourse analysis whereby firstly, the analysis includes a linguistic description of the language text. The chapters were chosen to analyse at a micro level to understand how best the field of equine practice or animal assisted practice is understood and introduced by each text. Therefore, the introductory chapters of each text were chosen, (if applicable) to be analysed within the micro method. In addition, any chapter in each book (if applicable), which speaks about the animal in particular, and the ethical involvement, has also been included in this section.

To establish the themes for the micro analysis I read each chapter and wrote down key words or groupings of words. For example, I found professionalism, certification and licenced to be key words used within the theme of professionalism. I then created a table, noting the themes and how they were described, along with other possible explanations of the themes.

This section of the results outlines the number of times each theme was counted as part of the micro analysis. In particular, areas that stood out or were different are explained within the six themes that emerged as significant in the selected texts.
Table 4: Theme and Explanation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Explanation</th>
<th>Different phrasing/word/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Animals involvement in AAT described as ‘use’  
Horses and animals are seen as tool or resource for human use | Use  
Using  
Productivity |
| Goals are required to meet a treatment outcome  
Equine practice is measureable by outcome/goals | Goals  
Goal  
Treatment goals |
| Animals need to be cared for too  
Animals involved in AAT should not be exposed to exploitation or suffering | Animal Welfare  
Stress  
5 freedoms  
Perspective of the horse |
| There needs to be regulation to ensure best practice  
Regulation of practitioners equals professionalism | Credential/s  
Credibility  
Competence  
Standard/s  
Professionalism |
| Animals as being connected to Nature and therefore humans more connected to nature by being with animals  
Horses have been working with and living with humans for a very long time. | Human-animal relationship  
Human-animal interaction  
Animal/human partnerships  
Connection to the natural world  
Eco-therapy  
Interspecies relationship  
Horse/human bond  
Connecting people and horses |

The above table refers to each theme and their explanation, and highlights the different phrasing and words used to describe each area, having 3-4 different words or phrasing apart from the theme animals and environment. The theme animals and environment had at least 8 ways of describing this theme, which is double the number of the other themes. There was a lack of clarity or agreement to describe this theme and the relationship between non-human animals and humans as there were several different phrasing/word/s recorded within each text coupled with differences across all texts on how this relationship was phrased and explained.

The table below shows how many times each theme was counted within each chapter. This table separates out each chapter, whether is it the introductory chapter or the ethics chapter from each text to provide a detailed account of where each theme was positioned and what the count was:
The highest count of any theme was in the area of professionalism at 102 counts of this theme and included the words professionalism, credential/s, competence and standard/s. This high level of counts was overwhelmingly contributed to by one particular chapter, Hallberg (2008) Chapter 10 titled, “Ethical considerations for EFMH/ES”, having 102 of the 125 counts for the theme of professionalism out of all texts. In fact, the majority of the contents of this chapter fell into this theme alone. Hallberg holds a Masters of counselling/psychology and is the Founder and Director of the Esperanza centre (a non-profit organisation that provides equine facilitated services). The other texts did not focus on this theme to the same extent. The Hallberg chapter is therefore considered an anomaly, and the count is not considered an accurate indication of all texts responses to this theme. Once the Hallberg (2008) text is removed from the count there are only 23 counts remaining of this theme within the other seven chapters and only 13 counts in total for the other four texts.

The next highest counts after professionalism were the themes of ‘animal welfare’ and ‘animal use’ at 71 and 78 respectively. Even though these two texts could be considered as opposite or binary themes, they produced a very similar level of counts. Higher numbers of counts for the ‘animal
welfare’ and ‘animal use’ themes were found in chapters on ethics, specifically in the Fine (2010) and Parish-Plass (2013) texts. Authors who had studied undergraduate psychology wrote both these texts. This material is presented in the table below:

Table 6: Themes by Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book and Chapter</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Animal Welfare</th>
<th>Professionalism</th>
<th>Animals as Environment</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine, Ch. 23</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish-Plass,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intro.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ch. 10</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intro</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ch. 10</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trotter,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intro.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ch. 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the micro material not all authors covered all the themes. There were only two texts which mentioned all themes within the Introduction chapter, which were Hallberg (2008) and Fine (2010). The theme of ‘animal welfare’ was included in every book and chapter analyzed without exception. From an analysis of the counts by the four different authors overall, it was found that all authors, addressed all of the six themes somewhere in their books.

4.3 Meso layer of research material

*Here I start to feel more comfortable with this method; the investigation broadens out into looking at larger chunks of discourse, which to me gives a more holistic view of the research problem. I have witnessed a herd of horses and how they register congruence and truth. When I am true to my internal feelings and myself for example; walking into the paddock acknowledging my anger they are breathing slowly, walking over to me with their ears forward. When I walk into the paddock and act calm even though internally I am afraid their breathing is fast, they do not walk over and will walk away when I try to get closer to them. Horses are aware of truth in intentions and I believe humans have a lot to learn from horses about how we are with each other and how we create social cultures based on true expression and acceptance. Horses accept me more when I show up with my true feelings rather than hide them or try to be someone I am not.* (Natalie Menyweather 2016)
Fairclough argues the meso layer is about the, ‘analysis of process of text production’ (1995, p. 23). The way the text is produced and the practices employed to shape the message are described inclusive of the following position: ‘power as in part ideological/discoursal, the power to share orders of discourse, to order discursive practices in dominance’ (Fairclough 1995 p. 24).

To highlight the results of this stage of the analysis, four selected discursive practices (Jacobs 2006, p. 140) were covered including:

1) Truth Modality – a statement about what is (which is ideologically informed rather than objective (Jacobs 2006, p. 140)
2) Obligation Modality – a statement about what ought to be (Jacobs 2006, p. 140), in order to convince someone to follow certain actions
3) Context - statements showing how the text is situated in wider contexts, which influence the production, interpretation and effect of the text (Jacobs 2006, p. 139)
4) Ambiguity – vague or imprecise terms used to deliberately convey multiple meanings (Jacobs 2006, p. 139).

To conduct the analysis of discursive practices, each chapter featured in the meso analysis was scanned for the aforementioned discursive practices. In addition, a broader scan over each text for chapters that may also house these discursive practices was conducted. Finally, quotes and areas from within each text whereby the aforementioned discursive practices are evident were recorded.

The following set of tables outline the themes and the discursive practices used to create each theme within the meso level of analysis.

The first table outlines each theme the discursive practice is making in the text, which is seen to be informed by either a truth modality, an obligation modality or ambiguity. The second column in the table provides direct quotes from the text demonstrating each discursive practice.

**Meso Themes**

Table 7a: Use of Animals

| It is historically normal to use animals, as animals have (and always have had) a use and purpose in society. | 'Throughout history, people have used animals' - whether for food, fiber, sport, adornment or companionship-as a means of satisfying human ends and interests’ (Fine 2010, p. 481). |

53
It is normal to objectify animals when using them

‘All use of animals involves their objectification’ (David in Parish-Plass 2013, p. 267), followed on the same page by, ‘Purportedly, AAP is just another example of the use of animals for the benefit of humans around the world that involves objectification of animals. However, AAP’s ethical uniqueness is derived from exactly the opposite attitude towards animals.’

‘One of the most common goals of AAP is the de-instrumentalization and de-objectification of animals in client’s attitudes towards them’ (David in Parish-Plass 2013, p. 268).

It is put forward as a truth that it is reasonable to use horses as a medium in psychotherapy

‘AAP offers the psychotherapist a powerful medium’ (Parish-Plass and Oren in Parish-Plass 2013, p. 258).

Table 7b: Professionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equine assisted practitioners should obtain certification and credentialing processes similar to National Boards for their profession.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘In the field of equine assisted interventions, there is movement toward establishing a national certification of credentialing process similar to that of the National Board of Certified Counsellors (CBNN) and that proves to the public and employers that the counsellor has met the national standards set by the counselling profession’ (Trotter 2011, p. 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equine assisted practitioners should gain credentials to have credibility and to have knowledge in this field of practice.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘CBEIP is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organisation started by professionals in the field who feel a credential for equine facilitated professionals is needed to identify the body of knowledge and those who practice in the field. The vision of the group is to promote professional credibility and to achieve public confidence in the transformative value of equine-human interaction’ (Trotter 2011, p. 2). ‘Furthermore, clients who are interested in pursuing EFMH/ES as a treatment or education method have the right to understand what the service entails, and if the professional facilitating the experience is appropriately educated, trained, supervised, and/or credentialed to provide the service’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 254).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7c: Significance of Growth in Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance of Growth in Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Throughout all of the texts the current contexts of the field of equine or animal assisted practice being a growth area is claimed.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The field has experienced explosive growth in recent years’ (Fine 2010, p. 481).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘EFMHS as a growth area, 700 centres that provide equine practice, 80 therapeutic boarding schools, universities offering degrees in the field’ (Hallberg 2008, p. xxv).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Terms such as explosive, new, burgeoning, emerging and mentioning the amount of centres, schools and degrees available are used to state the claim that this field is experiencing growth and is still developing.

‘Human-Animal Studies (HAS) is a relatively new interdisciplinary field that takes the human-animal relationship as its central focus’ (Parish-Plass 2013, p. xxi).

‘Animal-assisted psychotherapy (AAP) is a burgeoning field of psychotherapy which has received much attention in Israel over the past few years’ (Parish-Plass 2013, p. xxi).

‘Finally a new area of social work practice is emerging – that of veterinary social work practice’ (Risley Curtiss, in DeMello 2010, p. 284).

‘The emergence of EAC has developed as an outgrowth of the healing bond that can develop between animals and humans. This type of animal assisted therapy is in its infancy in terms of research, theory, and practice, and, as with any newly developing counselling field, the literature on qualitative observations and case studies is greater than empirical-based quantitative research and theory exploration’ (Trotter 2011, p. 9).

Table 7d: Link Between Animals and the Environment

| The way of describing the relationship between animals and humans in equine or animal assisted practice is vague. There is ambiguity between texts and within texts on how to describe this relationship between animals and their environment including humans. As noted in the themes table, a significant number of terms were used in conjunction with this theme. | Fine (2010) states ‘... mutually beneficial animal/human partnerships’ (p. 497) and ‘... understanding the human/animal connection’ (p. 4).

‘... the powerful animal-human bond’ (Trotter 2011, p. xv) and, ‘The role of animal-human interactions...’ (Trotter 2011, p. 5).

Finally, Hallberg (2008) has two different ways again to describe animals as environment and the relationship in animal assisted practice, ‘... the healing potential of the horse/human bond’ (Hallberg 2008, p. xxxi) and, ‘... the simplicity of the horse/human interaction’ (Hallberg 2008, p. xxxi). |

Within the themes of animal use, professionalism and significance of growth in the field the texts claim these areas as truths, there is no other argument presented alongside these themes to allow for flexibility in their understanding. It is possible simply by being predominant themes without any alternative perspectives these areas are then portrayed and understood as truths within the field of EAP/AAP. By having a large presence within the texts the themes of animal use, professionalism and significance of growth in the field could be considered part of the culture and truth of equine assisted practice by the reader.
Furthermore, the theme of professionalism is informed by obligation modalities in particular that practitioners ought and should get credentials and certification to be considered professional. This theme is practiced in the texts as both a truth modality and an obligation modality referring to the needs of clients in wanting a ‘professional’ and referring to other national bodies and their processes as an obligation to follow this way of certifying.

Finally, the theme linking animals and the environment is practiced discursively in a number of different ways, causing this theme to become vague due to lack of clarity. Therefore, by having several different ways to describing the one theme, in comparison to the other areas, the area of animals and environment looses its power to inform the field. One question that comes out of this analysis is why was the theme animals and environment overlooked and why were all other areas much clearer and less ambiguous?

4.4 Macro layer of research material

*Humans are not much different from horses and the herd structure. The difference I have experienced is horses seem to share and mutually acknowledge each other in their roles, accepting their current positioning and openly expressing any feelings they have through embodied movement. On the other hand, humans have moved away from embodied expression and instead created external structures whereby ideology and power operate at the highest institutional level down to individual perceptions of personal power and identity. (Menyweather 2016)*

The macro method brings together the broader social, political and ideological themes (Jacobs 2006, p. 141) implicit in the texts and introduced in the literature review. The conceptual framework for this level of analysis includes asking questions of the research material pertaining to ‘ideology and power’ (Jacobs 2006, p. 141). This section is primarily informed by Fairclough’s ‘sociocultural analysis of the discursive event’ (1995, p. 23). Ideology for the purpose of the macro analysis is seen as a ‘structure’ (Fairclough 1995, p. 71), which ‘has the virtue of showing events, actual discoursal practice, to be constrained by social conventions, norms, histories’ (Fairclough 1995, p. 71). In addition, Fairclough claims, ‘ideology has material effects, discourse contributes to the creation and constant recreation of the relations, subjects (as recognised in the Althusserian concept of interpellation) and objects which populate the social world’ (Fairclough 1995, p. 73).

Fairclough explains that the elements of discourses, which comprise an ‘ideological discursive framework associated with different groups’ where one ideological discursive framework is usually dominant (1995, p. 27). Therefore the themes within each group will be explored. Fairclough writes
that the purpose of CDA is to ‘denaturalise’ ideologies which otherwise make claims that appear to
be natural or ‘common sense’ (1995, p. 27). The macro layer of material also draws upon the socio-
political, ontological and ethical arguments developed in the literature review to extend Fairclough’s
schema. This enables the following foci to be brought to the data set:

1. Key themes and discourses, which are dualistic in that they create binary oppositional
categories through the use of language (Fook 2012, p. 57).
2. Language or themes which objectify or ‘other’ non-human animals (Jacobs 2006, p. 141)
3. Language or themes, which create a sense of ‘orderliness’ and ‘naturalness’ (Fairclough 1995,
p. 27).

The table below summarises the main themes and discursive practices from the research material
including the micro and meso material presented to this point:
Table 8: Power Dynamics within the Discursive Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes from Micro Analysis</th>
<th>Themes from Meso Analysis: Including truth obligation modalities and ambiguity</th>
<th>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Language creates dualisms</th>
<th>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Power through othering</th>
<th>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Ideology as common sense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Animals</td>
<td>The texts are possibly outlining a truth that it is: * Natural to use animals * Natural to objectify animals * Natural for animals to function as a medium.</td>
<td>Language pointing towards what people ‘do to’ animals rather than being with, for example: ‘Throughout history people have used animals …’ (Fine 2010, p. 481).</td>
<td>By othering animals, humans gain power to use them, for example, ‘Throughout history, people have used animals … as a means of satisfying human ends and interests’ (Fine 2010, p. 481).</td>
<td>The animal is described as a tool or a medium commonly used in therapy practice, and therefore ideologically normal to be used; ‘AAP offers the psychotherapist a powerful medium.’ (Parish-Plass and Oren in Parish-Plass 2013, p. 258).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>The texts present as an obligation that Practitioners consider obtaining professional training and qualifications EAP/AAT as a growth field.</td>
<td>The language around professionalism is possibly excluding some, and creating a dualism between human and animal, and of those who do not consider themselves ‘professionals’ through language such as wanting; ‘national certification of credentialing process’ (Trotter 2012, p. 1)</td>
<td>By only describing the identity of equine assisted practitioners as ‘professionals’ the texts may other practitioners and those that do not consider themselves ‘professional’, along with othering horses and clients, for example: ‘CBEIP is a non-for-profit, tax-exempt organisation started by professionals in the field who feel a credential for equine facilitated professionals …’ (Trotter 2011, p. 2).</td>
<td>The ideology that only if, the professional is trained etc., is presented as common sense, ‘… and if the professional facilitating the experience is appropriately educated, trained, supervised, and/or credentialed to provide the service’ (Hallberg 2008, p. 254).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Growth in the field</td>
<td>Throughout the texts equine or animal assisted practice being a growth area is claimed as a truth. The existence of this</td>
<td>Presenting the field of AAP/EAP as new possibly reinforces the humans and nature dualism, maybe reinforcing the dualism by</td>
<td>By presenting the field as a growth area the existing connections and relationships are othered and any other and/or existing multispecies connections</td>
<td>There is an ideology and culture of seeing the field of EAP/AAP as new, ‘The emergence of EAC has developed as an outgrowth of the healing bond that can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes from Micro Analysis</td>
<td>Themes from Meso Analysis: Including truth obligation modalities and ambiguity</td>
<td>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Language creates dualisms</td>
<td>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Power through othering</td>
<td>Discursive Practice from Macro Analysis: Ideology as common sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme is a truth modality in that it is unquestioned as being included in the research.</td>
<td>stating ‘Human-Animal Studies (HAS) is a <strong>relatively new interdisciplinary field</strong> that takes the human-animal relationship as its central focus’ (Parish-Plass 2013, p. xxi).</td>
<td>are not as acknowledged, ‘Animal-assisted psychotherapy (AAP) is a <strong>burgeoning</strong> field of psychotherapy which has received much attention in Israel over the past few years’ (Parish-Plass 2013, p. xxi).</td>
<td>develop between animals and humans. This type of animal assisted therapy is in its infancy in terms of research, theory, and practice, and, as with any <strong>newly developing counselling field</strong> …’ (Trotter 2011, p.9).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals as Environment</td>
<td>There is ambiguity presented regarding how the theme of animals as environment is voiced and conceptualized.</td>
<td>Dualistic language is right through this theme in how it vaguely tried to describe a multispecies connection for example; ‘animal/human partnerships’ (Fine 2010, pxi).</td>
<td>By not having a clear language around animals and environment this theme risks othering all beings, separating through discourse for example; ‘animal/human partnerships’ (Fine 2010, p. xi).</td>
<td>The ambiguous and possibly confused culture and ideology of this theme is practiced in this example, where through hyphens connecting yet disconnecting the words animal and human, and then by using the word bond they contradict as seen, ‘animal-human bond’ (Trotter 2011, p. 5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 59 |
The themes in this table are developed with illustrations of several discursive practices whereby language creates dualisms, power is gained through othering and ideology is presented as common sense. For example, within the theme of ‘animal use’ the dualism of humans versus animals is present and involves othering and objectification. Ideas that ‘professionals’ are somehow different from other people and animals, and those that are credentialed are yet different again from ‘other’ practitioners. These ideologies are presented as common sense in that they are not routinely questioned in the texts.

Finally, each of the discursive practices can be illustrated again by showing the ambiguity within the animals and environment theme, which demonstrates the dualistic, power and ideological influences of employing discursive practices to create unclear definitions within this theme.

Thus, by building the macro layer of the research material from the micro and meso layers the following language, power and ideology sensitive questions have been formulated:

1. What do professionals gain from the language of ‘using’ non-human animals? What is lost as a result of the predominant use of the language of ‘using’ non-human animals in the texts?
2. Is othering the predominant type of relationship between the authors and non-human animals in the texts? Is this indicative of the field of EAP?
3. Is it always presented as natural and common sense that animals are for human use? Was there any subjugated discourse of animals as equal beings?
4. Why do many of the ethics chapters referring to professionalism?
5. Does professionalism and credentials determine ethical and moral behavior?
6. Does professionalism in EAP rest on the use of animals?
7. ‘Animal welfare’ and ‘use’ themes count a similar amount of time for some chapters, how do both of these terms depend on the existence of each other? If there were no animal use discourses would there be a need for discourses of animal welfare?
8. Why has there been such ambiguity in the section on animals and environment? Why do the other theme areas not have this ambiguity?

The above questions present the macro level of the research in a way, which asks language, power and ideology sensitive questions of the research material. Although this is not an exhaustive list the questions point to areas which have not been covered by the texts which, however, are considered crucial in an analysis of whether speciesism is the dominant discourse in the selected texts. The next section will extend these questions in light of the political and social influences on EAP/AAT to begin
to understand to what extent non-human animals are considered mutually and without exploitation alongside humans within this field of practice.

4.5 Initial reflections

*We are all part of this world together, however humans have significant advantages over non-human animals and their welfare. I feel deeply responsible for the non-human animals in my care, due to their vulnerability at our whim, to be fed, and treated kindly. I therefore feel genuinely concerned for the future of my practice as a social worker if it does not fully include the consideration of all species of animals on earth. I don’t think I can call myself a social worker if my practice and ethical considerations do not include all of our kin. (Menywether 2016)*

The purpose of the initial reflections on the research material is to provide a basis for the discussion of the research material in the next chapter. These reflections propose a number of ideologies and potential theoretical influences on the material at this level. The discussion chapter will in turn draw upon the main arguments from the literature review and the reflections on the research material in an attempt to place critical social work ideas and ecofeminist multispecies ethics at the forefront of EAP/AAT practice and what this means for non-human animals.

**What do professionals gain from the language of ‘using’ non-human animals? What is lost as a result of the predominant use of the language of ‘using’ non-human animals in the texts?**

For professionals it may be practical to say ‘use’, as it implies the animal is a tool of their work, something they need to use to get the job done. The practicality from inserting terms such as ‘use’ into equine assisted practice may also be to put to language to the interaction between humans and animals in this work, thereby being able to refer to how animals are involved. However by inserting the word ‘use’ without completely understanding equine assisted practice given it is such an emerging field in its very description and language development is leaving too much room for the exploitation of animals. It may seem ‘normal’ in the practice of equine assisted psychotherapy for instance for texts to explain how horses can be ‘used’ as opposed to art therapy or sand play boxes. It therefore implies the horses are the tool, which the practitioner uses to support the client. However, the practicality of this is heavily laden with neoliberal ideas of production and othering at the expense of having tools for the job. The difference which is not acknowledged is that horses are sentient beings and have rights and needs which differentiate them from other ‘tools’ traditionally used in therapy practices. DeMello argues that, ‘the further we can distance those that we do not like or do not want to share resources with, the more we can mistreat them’ (2010, p. 259). It is possible that by overemphasizing the term professionalism then practitioners may be in a more
removed position to then use and exploit animals in practice. Professionals may gain power, status, reputation and acknowledgements for ‘using’ horses as a technique for practice in EAP in the same way professionals gain from being an expert at sand play or narrative practice. I suggest there needs to be other ways of speaking about horses which describe the relationship based on non-exploitation and mutuality, which still acknowledge the professional skills, attributes and knowledge of the human practitioner. It is important for practitioners to be working alongside horses in a mutual relationship coming together to support each other in a congruent way, so the relationship with the horse is not forfeited to gain professional skills or status. Practitioners, who unreflectively adopt the term ‘professional’, gain entry into the traditional ‘professional’ arena, a culture that is separated from nature. The professional gains entry into the capitalist patriarchal world by participating unquestioningly in dualistic relationships with the natural world. This may be another gain for the professional feeling more equally respected among peers on this basis of being void from a relationship with nature. Plumwood explains the dualism as, ‘… these other things – the feminine, the emotional, the merely bodily or the merely animal, and the natural world itself – have most often been denied their virtue and been accorded an inferior and merely instrumental position’ (1996, p. 157). What is lost as a result of the impact of the language describing the ‘use’ non-human animals in the texts is a lack of clarity for the readers around the value and positioning of animals within this work. Even though AAT models and therapist espouse to not objectify and not instrumentalise animals in their other ways of describing this work, the influence of ‘use’ means these goals lose their clarity.

Is othering the predominant type of relationship between the authors and non-human animals in the texts? Is this indicative of the field of EAP/AAP?

Othering may be a discursive practice in itself when considering, ‘othering refers to the practice of making people – or animals – different in order to justify treating them differently’ (DeMello 2012, p. 258). It is possible that othering is occurring in texts by the way ‘use’ describes the way horses or other non-human animals are involved in EAP/AAT. It appears that othering is the predominant type of relationship given the additional ambiguity in the animals in environment theme. Further, the lack of other discourses for describing the involvement of animals in practice may mean there is no clear way of describing the relationship of being with non-human animals. This may account for why it did not come up as a theme in the results. One example of what was evident in the results as ambiguous is the theme ‘animals as environment’. Whether or not this is a direct replication of another type of relationship with non-human animals by the authors warrants further investigation, however it is an example of a lack of clarity and the related ambiguity around the topic.
Many of the selected texts are edited and have chapters written by different authors. It is unclear whether the authors have asked themselves what is the predominant type of relationship between equine assisted practitioners and horses. Their standpoint on this topic is uncertain due to the language of ‘use’ in all texts. Some authors do describe very different ways of being with non-humans in their introductions, however, other edited chapters within the texts go on to demonstrate othering. It is not clear from this incongruency where the authors actually stand and position themselves in relationship to non-humans.

**Is it always presented as natural and common sense that animals are for human use? Was there any subjugated discourse of animals as equal beings?**

There are other discourses honoring animals however they did not come up in the themes, as they are all different and used interchangeably. As a result the reader may take away the message, dominant discourse of animals being for human use as the unquestioned, and unchallenged truth. This is what the truth modality in the meso results section presents; it is normal for animals to be for human use. There was no theme discernable in the selected texts of a multispecies ethic and mutuality.

**Why do many of the ethics chapters referring to professionalism?**

It seems the primary purpose of the ethics chapters continually referring to professionalism would be to link the credentials, training and skills to professional conduct, whilst at a broader level to professionalise this emerging field. It appears there is a culture of valuing credentials, training and skills of the practitioner to the point that it is seen to demonstrate how ethical their EAP/AAT practice is going to be. This is a very subtle truth modality which the meso analysis did not pick up. Therefore, it is possible the link between professionalism and ethical conduct is being presented as a truth. However, what the authors mean by this truth is not overtly stated in the texts.

In addition, there is no clear critique of a neoliberal culture of professionalism as a whole and how it may hinder the actual work of equine practice. For instance, there are no central themes, which mention the complexity of this work, which by its very nature is unpredictable and requires continual development and practice wisdom to build key tangible competencies around, as there are so many variables within a session to consider.

Ortner offers an explanation, ‘arguing that women are symbolically associated with nature, and men are associated with culture, and nature occupies a subordinate position to culture’ (1974 cited in
Therefore it is possible that this theme is influenced by the dualistic ideology that professionalism and men are closer to culture and further away from nature and therefore AAT/EAP involving animals (nature) warrants more credibility and ethics in the practitioner. This however is fraught as the texts may be trying to enhance credibility by linking credentials, training and skills to professionalism, however AAT/EAP is still a growing field which has little research or community backing due to its infancy. Therefore what credentials, training and skills makes a professional a professional in this field is barely known and it is argued that the work is more complex than is understood.

The continuing discussions on credentials and standards do not explain in detail how sessions are run to consider ethics for all parties and how these are monitored. Without doing this the texts present as a truth that professionalism equals standards and credentials and, in turn these equal ethical conduct. What is not spoken about in these sections is the need for the practitioner to be accountable for two other beings (at a minimum) of different species. Therefore due to this complexity how the practitioner holds professionalism and ethics may be linked, however at times may also be in conflict. There is very little mention if any at all, on what the AAT/EAT looks like practically or how it is conducted in an ethical way with the non-human animal/s involved.

**Does professionalism and credentials determine ethical and moral behavior?**

As mentioned in the above section the texts are unclear about what ethical and moral behavior is. However the texts then link professionalism to these arguments relating to credentials. This presents as a truth modality the idea that the more professional the person the more ethical their practice. The voices of horses are not considered in this argument. There is no stated frame of reference for practitioners on how to use all their knowledge, skills, credentials and standards in a way, which meets the ethical and moral needs of all humans and non-humans involved in EAP/AAP.

**Does professionalism in EAP/AAP rest on the use of animals?**

Yes, at this stage in the development of EAP/AAP there is very little discourse questioning professionalism and how this can create a dualism and othering of animals in practice. The theme of professionalism enhances the use of animals by not providing another discourse upon which the involvement of animals in practice can rest. It is possible that this theme of professionalism being unquestioned is an example of speciesism in that, ‘it is almost invariably taken for granted that animals, whatever attributes they may be held to possess, nevertheless uniformly fail to meet the criteria of personhood’ (Ryan 2011, p. 114). It may be that by not defining the involvement of
animals with consideration for their equal respect, the theme professionalism reinforces the use of animals.

Animal welfare and ‘use’ themes count a similar amount of time for some chapters, how do both of these terms depend on the existence of each other? If there were no animal use discourses would there be a need for discourses of animal welfare?

Due the unquestioned discourse around animal use in the texts there seems to be a need for each text to mention animal welfare on some level. There is very little mention of client or practitioner welfare in comparison, which suggests animals require more welfare consideration. One can only infer that the reason the texts are mentioning animal welfare is due to the dominant culture and ideology in how we treat non-human animals differently to humans and how they are omitted from human’s codes of ethics and practice. As Ryan concludes,

The omission of any individual group or issue sends a loud and incontrovertible message that any and all of the aforementioned do not matter, that their interests are trivial and that we ought to concern ourselves with more pressing issues. (2011, p. 5)

This may actually be a result of not having a clear way of being and practicing EAP/AAP with non-human animals and therefore there are two dualistic areas discussed; use and animal welfare. If the texts were clear about how to create I-thou relationships based on being with and mutuality there would be no need for use or animal welfare discourses. The presence of use and animal welfare others non-human animals in that it treats them as either some thing humans either use, or some thing whose welfare we need to consider because we use them. In comparison if we had a clear way of being in I-thou relationship and anything other than this way is othering, then there would be a clear discursive and practical alternative.

**Why has there been such ambiguity in the section on animals and environment? Why do the other theme areas not have this ambiguity?**

In regard to the discursive practice identified as ambiguity, the purpose of this is to have ‘vague or imprecise terms used to deliberately convey multiple meanings’ (Jacobs 2006, p. 139). The multiple meanings within this theme may be deliberate in creating a dualism from the clearer themes on professionalism, animal use and significance of growth in the field. None of these themes are connected to nature, and the only theme with reference to nature has ambiguous definitions. The question remains are they deliberate, what purpose do they serve the authors and the current ideological climate in terms of how humans relate with animals? It is possible the ambiguity is a product of the general vagueness of the field in terms of how EAP or AAP works with and alongside
horses, it may be a result of not having a clear discourse to describe this relationship or the connection.

Plumwood argues, ‘western thought has given us a strong human/nature dualism that is part of the set of interrelated dualisms’ (1993, p. 162). The ambiguity within this theme reinforces dualism and what is seen as feminine, uncultured and unprofessional due to its lack of connection to culture and dominant ideology. Given this is a significant difference in themes and discourses in comparison to the other themes, it is also a question as to why the authors did not bring attention and awareness to this issue.

4.6 Summary

The chapter has presented the research material which was created by adopting components of Fairclough’s (1995) CDA. The CDA method of creating the data has built towards the development of a number of macro questions deriving from the micro and meso layers of discursive practices in the selected texts. A table was developed which showed the power dynamics embedded within the micro and meso layers of the discerned discourses. The power dynamics included the discursive practices of: truth obligation modalities and ambiguity; language creates dualisms; power through othering, and; ideology as common sense. The overview of the discursive power dynamics was employed to formulate a number of macro level questions from the identified concepts and themes. The questions demonstrated the nuanced and inter-linked nature of the power dynamics within the texts, as they were evident throughout the documents in singular words, discursive practices and macro questions that could be asked of these discursive practices. In particular, the CDA of the texts has provided a rich complexity of ideas and questions that form the basis to discuss and analyse what this might mean for human and non-human relationships in professional helping contexts.
5.0 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This discussion will explore the themes of animal use, goals, professionalism and animals as environment to further understand the extent to which the relationships with non-human animals within EAP/AAT are ethical. Further, the discursive power dynamics relating to these themes will be explored to consider how dualistic human and non-human animal relationships in professional helping contexts can be changed. The research tables will be referred to, providing a link between the keys findings within the research material and the literature review on EAP and AAT. The research material suggests there could be unanswered questions within the field of EAP/AAT in terms of how non-human animals are considered, where this may include how unchallenged assumptions and claims can serve to maintain dominant speciesist discursive practices.

In particular, critical social work ideas and ecofeminist multispecies ethics, which inform key arguments in the literature review, will be used to explore the discursive themes within the texts, whilst answering the following questions,

- Where are we going with the field of equine assisted practice?
- Who wins and who loses and by what mechanisms of power?
- Is it desirable?
- What should be done? (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 148).

The purpose of asking these questions is, according to Flyvbjerg (2001), to ask power and value sensitive questions to understand the nature of human and non-human animal relationships as suggested by the CDA of the texts. For the purpose of the research, speciesism is understood to cause the discrimination of non-human animals and is seen to occur where dualisms and othering processes are evident in the texts. In this discussion, I seek to answer the research question - To what extent does equine assisted practice involve emancipatory multispecies ethics & practices whereby people and horses engage in mutual, non-exploitative relationships?
5.1 Where are we going with the field of equine assisted practice?

The following section will provide a space to explore the research results in terms of the direction discourses of the selected texts assume the field of EAP/AAP is going. This is not to say this is where it will definitely head, however the concern of this research is, left unquestioned dominant speciesist discourses may have the power to inform future discourses and possibly actual practice and relationships in this field. Therefore, the section aims to highlight the direction where these key themes are possibly going within EAP/AAP if left unchallenged.

5.1.1 Dominant discourse of speciesism based on unquestioned dualism

The research material presented in the previous chapter has documented themes of animal use, professionalism, significance of growth in the field and animals in environment within each of the micro, meso and macro layers of the CDA. By their presence alone, as explained in the meso section, the themes have created unquestioned and unchallenged truth in their existence as discourses within the field of EAP/AAP.

When considering multispecies ethics, the very fact that these discourses sit largely unchallenged within the texts may point out speciesism. As described in the literature review speciesism, or ‘discrimination based on species’ (Wolf 2000, p. 1), is that action which discriminates or leaves behind. In this instance discrimination is a possibility because the author’s texts in the research do not establish a discourse, which includes non-human animals in mutual, equal and non-exploitative ways with people.

By the lack of explicit regard for other ways of considering and explaining how non-human animals may be affected within the key themes, it is possible the direction EAP is going points to that of exploitation. Animals are already being exploited worldwide for their flesh, fur and skin as consumable resources and these practices go largely unquestioned by dominant culture (Francione & Charlton 2013). Therefore, without offering another way of discussing key themes and an opportunity to question the current discourses, the texts may be perpetuating the dominant culture, which involves the exploitation of non-human animals. This is confirmed by acknowledging discourse as social construct and how, ‘discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it’ (Fairclough 1992, p. 64).

Exploitation as referred to in the research question is defined as, oppression occurring through the transfer of the results of the labour of one social group to benefit another (Young 1990, p. 49). It is apparent from the dominant discourses in the selected texts that the field of EAP/AAP is heading in
the direction of exploitation of non-human animal’s labour in order to benefit ourselves. There is little discussion within the texts on how to offer a mutually inclusive basis for non-human animals in EAP.

At its very worst the type of exploitation which may be occurring within the fields of EAP/AAT is that of violence (Young 1990, p. 61). Violence is informed by cultural norms where ‘what makes violence a face of oppression is less the particular acts themselves, though these are often utterly horrible, than the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable’ (Young 1990, p. 61). The results of constructing non-human animals as objects to use in EAP/AAT is especially violent when considering, ‘discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other’ (Fairclough 1992, p. 63). The unchallenged discourse of speciesism may point towards a path of humans using animals within an othering relationship without consideration of the ethical needs of the non-human animal.

As previously discussed, the history and cultural norms in relation to the treatment of non-human animals has seen violence at the hands of non-humans in order to use animals for a variety of purposes. Young describes the exploitation as ‘violence which is systematic because it is directed at members of a group simply because they are members of that group’ (1990, p. 62). Speciesism based discourses can lead to non-human animals being treated very differently due to being non-human. It is the horse that is described as ‘used’ because they are a different species. According to Young (1990), this is precisely how systematic violence and exploitation occurs, by horses and other non-human animals being members of the non-human animal kingdom whereby they are voiceless to defend themselves to any possible exploitation and violence.

Implicit in the selected texts is the possibility of language around use of animals constructing violence within the EAP/AAT field as, ‘language influences the ways in which animals are socially constructed and therefore treated in human society’ (DeMello 2012, p. 284). The Power Dynamics table shows that through the othering and dualistic language within the key themes, there are constant references separating and discussing non-humans and humans in ways, which are pointing towards non-mutuality. As Ryan argues, ‘human dignity ought not to be deemed to have such fragility that it invariably demands the derogation of all other species as of no ultimate consequence’ (2011, p. 61). It appears that the broader ideological culture of human-animal dualism has impacted the problem of human knowledge claims in the texts as the truth and therefore, the authors offered very little voice to non-human animals. The next section will discuss the voicelessness of non-human animals within the research material and where this may direct the field of EAP/AAT.
5.1.2 The absence of animal's perspectives and voice

The texts do not explicitly represent the voices of non-humans I wondered whether there are non-verbal and embodied ways of doing this given that each species to communicate in different ways. As explained, ‘that we do not share a common language with non human animals - although we can certainly communicate with them - makes it even harder to access their minds’ (DeMello 2012, p. 19). Therefore, it may be that humans have not yet developed an ethical way to represent the voices of another species and this is then a limitation of EAP/AAP in general; that non-human animals may never be completely understood as they would by their same species. However, another argument is that this is also something, which is relevant to humans, how can a human being be completely understood, as words themselves could provide limitations for what humans fully experience and interpret through our cultural and ideological lens. The texts are therefore limited in their ability to offer embodied understandings whereby non-humans voices/communication can be observed. In addition, there is no space in the texts where the human is able to communicate with non-humans using embodied space, eye contact and other cues to mutually develop a relationship and gain perspective. Thus the question of whether the culture of voicelessness of non-human animals within the texts is directing the field of EAP and AAP is even more paramount.

If, ‘words about animals shape our understanding about animals’ (DeMello 2012, p. 284), it seems there are still areas within the EAP/AAT field to be developed to enhance our understanding. Without explicitly discussing and questioning this dilemma within the texts there is a deafness of humans to hear other animals voices, therefore warranting no further discussion on behalf of the animals. Ethically this is concerning and may see the field of EAP/AAP represented in these texts as being premised on exploitative human and non-human interspecies relationships. It is assumed the authors and editors of the texts would have not intentionally gone out to exploit non-human animals; one can imagine they would all call themselves animal lovers. Therefore, it is alarming how by not questioning or putting forth another perspective, what the themes present. Given the above information and without a discourse which offers an alternative way of being with non-human animals it could be said the themes by omission and implication represent a form of violence towards non-human animals.

Ryan proposes a more inclusive social work ethics would include a commitment, ‘to the pursuit and maintenance of the wellbeing of the human and non-human animal, and the integrity of the natural world’ (2011, p. 166). When dominant discourses are left unquestioned, the field of EAP/AAP is headed in a direction whereby human’s ethical obligations towards others, human and non-human may be disregarded.
5.1.3 What values are being pronounced or threatened?

The research material allows for clarity around what values are being pronounced as highlighted by the themes (Table 11), and the macro analysis provides some key questioning around what broader ideological values are being pronounced in these areas (Table 8). The values which are being pronounced within the texts are those of human perspectives based on the current culture of speciesism. Social work has a role to play in highlighting the pronounced speciesist values, which may be guiding the field of EAP/AAT. As Ryan argues, ‘Respect for individuals, which enjoins and entails respect for, and loving attention to, all sentient creatures, is a principle that ought to inform social work’s moral framework if it is to have any pretension to being a holistic discipline.’ (2011, p. 150)

A value, which is threatened, is the value of animals, human and non-human, as intrinsically linked and part of nature and environment. The research material highlights ambiguity within this field, where it might be expected that attention would be given to non-human animals through trying to describe both human and non-human animal’s relationship with nature. By having the dualism of animals-humans and then animals as environment without mention of how humans are connected to environment there is a continuing separation and speciesism in the texts whereby an inclusive multispecies ethic is threatened. Plumwood explains this dualism and the disadvantage it creates,

The inferiorisation of human qualities and aspects of life associated with necessity, nature and women – of nature-as-body, of nature-as-passion or emotion, of nature as the pre-symbolic, of nature-as-primitive of nature-as-animal and of nature as the feminine continues to operate to the disadvantage of women, nature and the quality of human life. (1993, p. 21)

The questions which derive from Flyvbjerg’s (2001) schema have raised concerns to be considered when forming a multispecies ethic within a dominant discursive culture where animals are left out of discussions. Ethical dilemmas relating to including animals to ensure they are not discriminated against by dualistic and othering language have been discussed.

5.2 Who wins and who loses and by what mechanisms of power?

This section will highlight the potential power dynamics within the discursive practices of the research material. It then goes to explore how this might affect multispecies ethics and mutual non-exploitative relationships within the field of EAP/AAT. The perspective within the critical theory and multispecies ethical approach is the acceptance and understanding that all beings have their place in contrast to dualisms, which are the basis for exploitative relationships (Plumwood 2003).
The question of ‘who wins and who loses?’ is itself a dualism but one used cautiously in an attempt to answer the hard question – are animals being exploited at the expense of human’s interests? The purpose of this section and asking this question is to explore how to work with the complexities within duality. Thus, asking this question can demonstrate how to discuss and gain an understanding of winners and losers in relation to power dynamics which otherwise might be missed by uncritical acceptance of the dominant discourses in the selected texts.

The theory of winners and losers comes from the notion of exploitation, whereby unequal power relations exist deeming one party inferior and the transfer of labour from non-human animals to benefit humans (Young 1990, p. 49). For instance, how animals are ‘used’ in practice and the language around animal use culturally implies whoever is ‘using’ the animal has control and power and this term would suggest whoever is ‘using’ is winning.

5.2.1 Non-human animals have lost

The theme of animal welfare alongside animal use (see Table 3) points to the consideration of animal’s needs and ethics within practice. However, the existence of the need for animal welfare at all remains unquestioned within the texts as it does in society in general (Ryan 2011). The reason we have human rights is because people, other humans commonly exploit other humans. The reason animal rights and ethics, are needed is due to the issue of animal exploitation. Therefore, it is concerning that although animal welfare is discussed in the texts alongside animal use, this doesn’t seem to address the issue of animal welfare. Animals might continue to be exploited and lose by the co-existence of these two themes. As Francione argues, the animal welfare position is still exploitative in that it advocates for measured and controlled environments for exploitation or in this case ‘use’ to occur and rejects the idea that animal use is acceptable if we treat animals humanely (Francione, 2008, p. 27). Non-human animals continue to be othered and marginalised within the EAP/AAT texts where there is no explicit multispecies ethics.

5.2.2 Humans may have lost too (albeit, differently)

The authors of the texts benefit in writing about their experiences within this field of practice and may gain acknowledgement and status from this work. However, humans have positioned themselves as separate from non-human animals and from nature itself within the speciesist discursive practices and themes. For example, within the growth area field by not having an explicit language around animals and environment this theme risks othering all beings, separating species through discourse (Fine 2010, p. xi.). One must wonder whether humans by being positioned as the ‘professionals’ (see Table 4) have also been positioned as the other in the human-animal relationship
(see Table 8). By overemphasising the professional identity of the human and leaving out discourses linking humans and non-humans as beings connected to each other and the natural world, there is the real possibility of great loss for everyone. By not questioning or challenging the social norm of the human/nature human/non-human dualism the connections and opportunities for mutual relationships are not explored.

When othering is considered in its purpose of, ‘making people – or animals – different in order to justify treating them differently’ (DeMello 2012, p. 259), neither humans or non-human animals may benefit by being treated so differently as they are removed from connecting with each other. If there is indeed an intrinsic dualistic culture with non-human animals, it is not clear where humans are actually positioned. There is separation in the texts as humans are not always positioned as being close to nature or environment by the existence of the theme animals and environment and language such as, ‘animal/human partnerships’ (Fine 2010, p. xi) and ‘animal-human bond’ (Trotter 2011, p. 5). If there were explicit discourses around connection to nature and connection to environment, which referred to human and non-human animals as one, this would offer another option towards acknowledging all species and nature.

5.3 Is it desirable?

The discourses identified within the texts are not desirable. The predominant dualistic, speciesist premise of the research material means no party wins in the moral sense. In addition, the speciesist discourse is positioned on power, which will be outlined in the next section. Whether it is desirable that animals are exploited and controlled in a range of circumstances and as focused upon in the research in the field of EAP, is a matter of ethics and animal rights. It is a matter of what is considered as right and wrong, and inter-relatedly whose knowledge claims are legitimated by not questioning dominant discourses.

5.3.1 Mechanisms of undesirable power

As Ross explains,

My efforts to move beyond a ‘self versus other’ ontology (Tong 1993) and its related essentialist and objectivist epistemes, has sensitized me to the politics of all knowledge claims as not being benign or accidental. (2002, p. 278)

These politics of being and knowing are influenced by the mechanisms of power that may be operating in any given situation (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 123). Rees writes that, ‘the basis of power may
provide the opportunity to act but a critical perspective on the exercise of power will affect what people ask, see and do’ (1991, p. 50). The argument arrives then at the point of ethics, where ethics is about what we do which is always about the exercise of power. Power is the ability to influence others to achieve one’s own interests (Ross 2014, p. 4) and is conveyed in dominant as well as subjugated discourses (Hartman 1990, p. 3). A non-dominant discourse of eco-feminist ethics where non-human animals are regarded as equal sentient beings with humans informed the research but was not found in the selected EAP/AAT texts. As Tong writes,

Because feminists are committed to ‘eliminating subordination of women – and other oppressed persons [and beings] – in all its manifestations’ (Daly 1978), a feminist approach to ethics asks questions about power – that is about domination and subordination – even before it asks questions about good and evil, care and justice, or mothers and fathers. (cited in Ross 2002, p. 279)

The research literature has detailed the failure of the Australian Association of Social Work’s Code of Ethics (AASW 2010) to clearly address non-human ethics within social work practice. Consequently, the research argues for the practising of an ethical responsibility to all species and uses critical theory to challenge the dominant ideology whereby, ‘postmodern ethics asserts a responsibility to otherness’ (Leonard 1997, p. 151). For the purpose of the research, postmodernism involves a critique of all theories which set out to explain everything, in particular ‘postmodernists believe that there is no one system of domination that holds pre-eminence over others’ (Pease and Fook 1999, p. 11).

The multispecies ethical position of the research then involves, ‘the attempt to clear a space for the voices of those who have been reduced to objects, have never spoken as active subjects, but have always been acted upon by ‘those with knowledge’ (Leonard 1997, p. 151). The ‘others’ in social work practice are the non-humans who are not recognised within ethical guidelines, and ‘those with knowledge’ (Leonard 1997, p. 151) are the humans whom create practices which oppress and exclude the voices of animals. Plumwood writes, ‘Our failure to situate dominant forms of human society ecologically is matched by our failure to situate non-humans ethically, as the plight of non-human species continues to worsen.’ (2002, p. 2)

Here it is evident the failure to consider non-human animals ethically is not desirable as it means no one wins within this situation and is possibly creating a culture of violence through exploitation. In particular, the theme of animals and environment and its lack of clarity in providing one way of understanding how humans and non-human animals relate is undesirable. Without exploring the
difficulty in explaining this theme within the text, the reader is left without a framework to understand why animals as environment is relevant. The power the texts have to either question dominant cultures towards the treatment of non-human animals and/or maintain the culture is not overtly acknowledged.

5.3.2 A lack of animal rights language

The CDA method of constructing the research material did not show any sustained discourses related to animal rights where this might cause caution or even abstinence relating to the involvement of animals in helping people. The discussion of the undesirable mechanisms of power in the discursive practices appears to foreclose any seeking of an alternative discourse on animal rights. A multispecies ethic needs to be upheld from an animal rights rather than an animal welfare position if it is to provide an alternative to dualisms, animal use and speciesism. For the purpose of this research, ‘Rights theory seeks to abolish the hierarchical characterization of nonhumans as “things” in a “person/thing” dualism.’ (Francione 2009, p. 294) With this in mind a multispecies ethics needs to consider the work of Francione, an animal rights activist, who takes an abolitionist approach to the use of animals which includes no eating, wearing or using animals for pleasure (Francione 2009, p. 20). Francione and Charlton discuss, in relation to animal rights, ‘that we have no moral justification for using non-humans at all, irrespective of the purpose and however ‘humanely’ we treat them, and that we ought to abolish our use of non-humans’ (2013, p. x). The defining feature of the animal rights position involves a rejection of the idea that animal life is of lesser value than human life (Francione and Charlton 2013; Francione 2008).

Francione and Charlton argue,

All sentient beings – human or non-human - are equal for the purpose of not being treated as resources, just as an intellectually gifted human and a mentally disabled human are equal for the purpose of not being used as a forced organ donor or as a non-consenting subject in a painful biomedical experiment. (2013, p. 5)

Francione’s (2013) non-negotiable approach to animal rights provides knowledge and non-speciesist language to constantly unsettle dominant, exploitative relationships with animals when the project is to engage animals to help people. The ethical dilemma of seeking to include non-humans in social work practice cannot be fully or finally resolved and risks exploiting non-human animals without further development of multispecies ethics and discourse within the field of EAP/AAT.
5.4 What should be done? Implications for social work

If you are a feminist and are not a vegan, you are ignoring the exploitation of female nonhumans and the commodification of their reproductive processes, as well as the destruction of their relationship with their babies;

If you are an environmentalist and not a vegan, you are ignoring the undeniable fact that animal agriculture is an ecological disaster;

If you embrace nonviolence but are not a vegan, then words of nonviolence come out of your mouth as the products of torture and death go into it;

If you claim to love animals but you are eating them or products made from them, or otherwise consuming them, you see loving as consistent with harming that which you claim to love.

Stop trying to make excuses. There are no good ones to make. Go vegan. (Francione 2013)

This final question asks the implications of the research for social work and suggest what social workers can do, to enable a dialogue about speciesism and its alternative emancipatory discourses. Social work has a potential leadership role within the field of EAP/AAT if it adopts a multispecies ethics (Ryan 2011) to inform the anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive ideas, which underpin its social justice mandate (AASW 2010).

5.4.1 A multispecies ethics

A multispecies ethics can provide a beginning point to appreciate how to be ‘with’ and engage non-humans in social work practice. Such an ethics needs to include the well-being of horses and all non-human animals at every juncture, including getting their basic needs being met. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal’s (RSPCA) five freedoms for animals are to be upheld where these include:

Freedom from hunger and thirst: by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour; freedom from discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area; freedom from pain, injury or disease: by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment; freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind; freedom from fear and distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

(2009, n.p.)
How can social workers in the field of equine assisted practice know these above processes are occurring for the horses and other animals who are included? The RSPCA (2009), for example, describe the five freedoms for animals as being a ‘logical’ framework for analysis within any animal ‘use’ situation. This objectifying language of animal ‘use’ has already been captured and analysed within the research. Therefore, the larger question remaining is - should horses even be involved in equine assisted therapy?

For current purposes a non-purist, relativist position mediated by an adoption of multispecies ethics will be considered as the baseline requirement of equine assisted practice. Multispecies ethics can be understood to involve several capacities, as Ryan proposes in his draft of inclusive social work ethics,

> The discipline of social work holds that each society has a moral obligation to pursue social and moral justice, to provide maximum benefit for all its members, irrespective of species membership, and to afford them protection from harm. (2011 p. 168)

Furthermore, to consider multispecies ethics would be to form a basis of respect, care and embodied relationships to enable human language to be decentred as the only and privileged way to communicate and hear the voices of non-human animals. This will mean that what horses do not say, and how they are seen yet not heard is acknowledged and addressed. Horses needs must be presented as important even if they are voiceless. To address exploitation and to build a mutual relationship humans must speak for horses, stand up for their rights and consider their ethics to honour that, ‘horses speak in silence, never forgetting to listen’ (Resnick 2005, p. 215).

Specifically, the principle within, ‘Service to Human and Non-Human Individuals’ (Ryan 2011, p. 169) needs to be developed to model inclusive multispecies ethics. In particular, the principle, ‘to work with, on behalf of, or in the interests of all human and non-human individuals, to enable them to deal with personal and social difficulties and to obtain essential resources and services’ (Ryan 2011, p. 169). Finally, what should be done is for field of EAP/AAT to, ‘oppose[s] prejudice and discrimination against any human or non-human individuals, and challenge views and actions that vilify, stereotype or render morally invisible human or non-human individuals’ (Ryan 2011, p. 169).

The explicit multispecies focus needs to highlight and hold tensions within the dualisms and domination, which may be occurring within this field.

A new discourse must acknowledge this and address where non-humans and some humans may be marginalised or excluded from ethical consideration, care and respect. Without doing this the field of EAP/AAT risks representing and establishing a culture of violence where exploitation and
marginalisation (Young 1990) are the undercurrent of an unchallenged dominant speciesist
discourse.

5.4.2 Towards a critical and rights based multispecies social work practice for all
species

This research is premised in a critique of the social work profession in so far as it does not
encompass the rights and interests of non-human species in its mission statement, Code of Ethics
(AASW 2010) and public records and debates (ANZSWWER 2014). It is argued that social work has
been impacted by the dominant neoliberal discourses where this may be occurring to such an extent
that its claims of enabling social justice for disadvantaged social groups are often seen as falling
short of what oppressive circumstances require (Briskman, Latham & Goddard 2008). Drawing on
Foucault’s idea of ‘the gaze’ of the expert in the helping relationship, Leonard writes that social work
is one of ‘the professions of welfare [which] exercise disciplinary power’ (1997, p. 55). This
disciplinary power is exercised through expert discourses, which are based on objectifying the
participants in the helping process. Leonard (1997, p. 151) argues that an unreflective urge that
assumes an unquestioned expertise to know what is best according to legitimated professional
knowledge and skills can be justified by an ‘ethic of responsibility to act’. Unless this urge to act
upon/toward people seeking help is tempered with an ‘ethic of responsibility to otherness’ then the
effect of helping is unlikely to be empowering or emancipatory for the helpee (Leonard 1997, p. 151).

A key implication is that the nature of helping in social work where animals are involved may
reproduce the dominant dualistic discourses in relationships with both human and non-human
species. For example, one of the main ways in which the people who come to social work involving
equine assisted practice sessions are othered is through practitioner’s adherence to the medical
model, where it is suggested that:

As a discourse, the medical model is not only a set of ideas and assumptions, it is also a set
of linguistic forms that both encapsulate and sustain the discourse; social practices – actions
presented within the discourse as normal, natural and reasonable; and power relations.
(Thompson 2011, p. 124)

Illich argues that the dominance of the medical profession has had the effect of medicalising all
spheres of society (cited in Thompson 2011, p. 126) where this dominant medical discourse is
intricately inter-related with neoliberalist and imperialist discourses. An aspect of this medicalising
power dynamic is the way it is embedded in everyday language through the use of the health metaphor,
One crucial consequence of this is that the metaphor so easily becomes translated into a literal meaning, creating a discourse, which thereby adds further to the oppression experienced – in effect medicalising inequality. (Thompson 2011, p. 121)

For instance, the description of individuals who engage with equine assisted practice often involves labelling of their mental health including, ‘attachment avoidance’ or ‘attachment anxiety’ (Parish Plass 2013, p. 114). Furthermore, participants are described based on a medicalised discourse including, ‘panic disorder and agoraphobia’ (Tedeshi, Fine and Helgeson, cited in Fine 2010, p. 422). This is problematic as it similar to the othering of animals where the labelling of humans under particular discourses possibly renders them similarly voiceless and oppressed by dualistic language (Plumwood 1993, p. 3). The othering of humans is inextricably linked to the othering of animals as DeMello explains; ‘we have argued that human oppression and animal oppression emerged with the domestication of plants and animals, and the rise of state-level civilizations’ (2012, p. 272).

The dualistic ontology of mental ill health and other differences as deviant and de-valued, for example, is part of a dominant social constructionism influencing, ‘the ways in which individuals shape their world through ways of knowing and thinking’ (Pease and Fook 1999, p. 9). Interestingly, it may be the focus on people’s mental ill health and related labelling itself, which is most concerning as it perpetuates the othering and violence, which may be occurring within the field of EAP/AAT. Ross (2014) explains how the ways people are treated in professional helping contexts can involve a range of often socially accepted violence to the extent that force is used in the name of helping. She claims that violence is the more concerning pathology in society, where the language of ‘madness [can serve] as a political marker [of the exercise of a disciplinary medicalised form of power] that is not recognised, but in a contradictory way this non-recognition is part of the mechanisms of power reinforcing itself’ (Ross 2014, p. 4). For the purpose of this research health, is seen as, ‘not only a social construction, but also an ideological one – a concept or construction that both reflects and reinforces existing social relations and thereby legitimises the status quo and the discourses on which it is based’ (Thompson 2011, p. 122). Given that the premise of the research looks at discourses in regards to non-human animals as being socially constructed, it is seen as a social problem within the scope of social work whereby, ‘discursive and ideological practices operate to keep organisational violence [in the human services] as one of the last undeclared issue of our time’ (Ross 2014, p. 4).

Thus, the literature in the mental health area shows a culture of blaming and pathologising the person seeking help (Ross 2014) with regard to how people who need support are described and treated. The research argument revolves around the inter-relationship between the nature of
helping and the patriarchal history of western culture where colonising, stereotyping and othering have created and reinforced dualities such as feminine/women, sane/insane, expert/patient (Plumwood 1993, p. 43). The same history which impacts on the practices of domination, based on perpetuating dualities in the broader helping professions, shapes the cultural norms and discourses in social work and, as the research suggests, in the interventions that are offered in the equine therapy and learning context (Plumwood 1993, p. 43).

5.4.3 Embodiment and critical social work

At this point the connection between ‘being with’ and ‘embodiment’ to critical social work will be made. The discussion relating to language and discourse in the research is, ‘also about how individuals propagate and participate in this construction, and how this in turn shapes the way individuals act, see themselves and are seen’ (Fook 2012, p. 82). Therefore, whether humans are identified as embodied is inextricably linked whether or not humans will connect with other animals. Further, ‘we should not regard animals in terms of what they share with humans; we should consider rather what humans share with all living beings’ (Karremann 2013, p. 23). It can be argued that how critical social workers see the individual, with whom they work, is primarily driven by what self and identity are considered to constitute (Fook 2012, pp. 82-84). Humans are differentiated in social work literature where in fact we are all animals. In turn it is possible this disconnection is at the heart of other disconnections for the human species. For instance, non-human animals have an intrinsic mind body connection, which they need for survival. For instance, if they feel the wind change and sense a storm coming they leave to find shelter, their mind looks for a solution to a bodily sensation (Karremann 2013, p. 23).

Critical social work would say it is the dualistic and dichotomous thinking which has devalued the animal instinct and embodiment within human identity and therefore we are, ‘to be constructed as binary opposites, creating forced categories of choices, often opposed to each other, which one member of the pair is usually privileged’ (Fook 2012, p. 84). The dichotomising of the non-human animal instinct is clear within the nature world as Plumwood argues,

Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast of reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilised, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness. (1993, p. 20)

All animals are always embodied, which is a common ground upon which humans can experience ‘being with’ other animals. This point is summed up eloquently by Karremann who claims, ‘and what we share is, in Costello’s view, the condition of ‘embodiedness, the sensation of being [...] of being a
body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world’ (2013, p. 23). It is the abandoned area of embodiment within social work practice which most clearly demonstrates that predominantly, ‘social worker’s world view, irrespective of theoretical orientation, is uniformly anthropocentric’ (Ryan 2011, p. 5).

We have strived so hard to be ‘different’ from non-human animals, we have removed the very thing that we fundamentally share which is embodiment. Embodiment in this way can be seen as an anecdote to the dualistic and speciesist nature of social work. As Karremann argues, ‘it is the shared experience of embodiment which allows us to imaginatively identify and sympathise with other beings’ (2013, p. 23). Therefore, it is from this place of embodiment that ‘being with’ non-human animals is afforded, where we remove the confines of the written and spoken human language and engage with the whole body.

Critical theory in social work has given the researcher a standing point to begin to ask the questions that are central to understanding the aims and questions for the research. Critical theory provided the platform to ask questions to understand the way social work is implicated in the embodied and discursive aspects of speciesism, which is occurring within practice settings and professional guidelines (Wolf 2000; Ryan 2011). Yet this progressive grouping of theories and ethics (Brookfield 2005), have not been encompassing of non-human animal’s rights and needs.

5.4.4 Summary

The discussion chapter has built upon the research material from the selected EAP/AAT texts to discuss the results in relation to issues raised in the literature review and what this means for social work practice. The question - To what extent does equine assisted practice involve emancipatory multispecies ethics & practices whereby people and horses engage in mutual, non-exploitative relationships, has been explored through Flyvbjerg’s (2001) four key questions, Where are we going with the field of equine assisted practice?

Who wins and who loses and by what mechanisms of power?

Is it desirable?

What should be done?

Critical social work can provide an important theoretical contribution to the field of EAP/AAT by offering insights into the socially constructed ways in which non-human animals may be oppressed the selected texts. Connections have been made between human and non-human experiences of
discrimination to inform a multispecies ethic. In particular, the discussion has sought to contribute to the challenge posed by Hanrahan, ‘By bringing into focus the connections between speciesism, interpersonal violence and animal abuse, slavery, and misogyny, research in the field of human-animal interactions and relationships has fundamental implications for critical ... social work.’ (Hanrahan 2010, p. 283)

The CDA of the selected texts and the posing of power sensitive questions arising from this analysis has revealed the potentially exploitative impact on non-human animals of dualistic, speciesist discursive practices in key knowledge sources shaping the field of EAP/AAT. Critical social work ideas strengthened by the adoption of eco-feminist ethics have provided a platform to discuss the speciesist nature of EAP/AAT. These discussions have highlighted the socio-political and cultural influences of the possibly dominant exploitative relationship that might in turn be active within social work where non-human animals are engaged in helping humans.
6.0 Researcher Positionality

As per the methodology of this research (section 3.6) the positionality of the researcher as a human animal runs the risk of contributing to the research problem given the researcher is a human speaking about the exploitation of non-human animals. This bias is challenged through ongoing reflections whilst questioning the cultural norms associated with how humans treat non-humans.

I bring a number of privileges and vulnerabilities to the data interpretation and in particular to this discussion, in which I wish to expand on arguments that go beyond what I can say from this research. Because of this, I have an urgency to interpret the data and then move on. This too I recognise is a kind of neoliberal time pressured thing, which is part of my responsibility to this project to finish this research within a specific time frame. However, it has meant I don’t feel overly ready to finish, as though I haven’t formed all of the arguments or been able to get all of the theories together as I have run out of time. I am wanting to present something solid and rigorous and yet give the research space to sit and evolve into new knowledge. Unfortunately, such an evolution will surpass the research deadlines I face and therefore, I am inserting her what I know now and will continue to support my personal growth and how I relate to this field afterwards.

In addition, when starting this research I had an agenda to introduce animals into practice and ethics of social work. The one privilege I do have involves the skills and knowledge I have to question my practice possibly to a greater extent than my EAP/AAT colleagues who do have a critical social work framework. As I have evolved in this research I have a huge vulnerability, which I find difficult to speak of, which is to question, whether or not we should even be considering involving non-human animals in social work practice for the purpose of EAP/AAT if these beings do not have the capacity to ask us to be involved? We are unable to provide non-human animals the same clear choices as humans in whether they wish to participate given they are already domesticated. Therefore, do non-human animals have choice if they don’t have all of the information?

This realisation is haunting for me. I wonder whether this whole research is a waste of time. Whether I should have taken on a clearer project in terms of how it addressed inequality within species much more aggressively. This research is very safe in that it didn’t even need an ethics application; I suppose I kept myself safe worrying what my colleagues and academic peers would think of me doing such different research. I also initially lacked support to find a suitable supervisor who fully understood and aligned with some of the values I shared. This worrying about what other people will think, and then finding the strength to believe in myself to do it regardless constituted another major vulnerability experience throughout this research.
One final vulnerability is how much I believe in Veganism as a moral baseline for life and in particular the field of EAP/AAT. In this I concur with Gary Francione and agree that all use of horses is exploitation. As people begin to deem veganism as a moral baseline and in not using animals in any way, we will create room for other ways of being, not only with animals but also with our fellow humans in ways, which are mutual and embodied. When we are not embodying non-violence in what we eat, wear and use how can we embody or begin to argue for mutual relationships with clients and horses in equine practice and further, animal assisted therapy?
7.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

For the purpose of creating the research material a critical discourse analysis has been undertaken of key EAP/AAT texts. Thereby contributing towards answering the question - To what extent does equine assisted practice involve emancipatory multispecies ethics & practices whereby people and horses engage in mutual, non-exploitative relationships? The research problem was identified as the issue of speciesism both within social work practice and in society at large and how this impacted the development of the new field of EAP/AAT. The primary aim was to understand the nature of the dominant discourses operating in the field of EAP/AAT.

The literature review was undertaken from a critical social work and ecofeminist perspective and designed to address social work’s anthropocentrism. It also outlined the influences and theoretical underpinnings, which make up the field of equine assisted practice, whereby non-human animals are involved in therapy or learning sessions to support and help humans. Terms such as ‘dualisms’ and ‘othering’ were introduced alongside ‘being-with’ and ‘I-Thou’ relationships with non-human animals. The literature review explore[d] many forms of dualisms that structure human nature and human-non-human animal separation.

For the methodology a critical discourse analysis alongside researcher reflection was presented as a strategic way of unearthing and understanding insidious dominant discourses. Five key texts and select chapters were analysed using a three-tiered method to provide insight into the micro, meso and macro layers of discursive practices. Deconstruction gave selected texts informed discussion about dualisms linguistic/conceptual and how theory influences the specific discourses of animal use, the ideology of professionalism, significance of growth in the field and animals as environment.

The research points out that oppression of animals exist when there is a uniformly unchallenged and unquestioned dominant speciesist discourse being exercised by humans. The speciesist dominant discourse found to be embedded in the selected texts, in the absence of an explicit language for non-human animal rights, also highlighted the nature of their oppression. The research further suggests that exploitation undoubtedly occurs as a result of dualisms, which ‘objectify’ non-human animals and leaves them voiceless and their needs marginalised in professional helping contexts. In contradistinction, it is not possible to draw general, unequivocal conclusions about the extent of alternative emancipatory discourses and multispecies ethics in the EAP/AAT texts. It perhaps though is possible to suggest there is cause for concern that a non-exploitative and mutually respectful being with non-human animals was not explicitly valued and promoted in the source documents.
Three recommendations arise from the research and are briefly noted here in closing as indicators of areas for future research and dialogue:

1. CDA as a research methodology can inadvertently marginalise the authors of the selected EAP/AAT texts, as they are not included in the effort to answer the research question. Therefore it is recommended that further dialogue begins with AAT practitioners and academics, modelling congruency and I-thou relationships, which may provide rich insights into the nature of discourses. This recommendation thereby demonstrates an understanding of language which is not monolithic or one dimensional but can be contradictory and shifting depending on the context thereby applying an ethic of love (Ross 2016, p. 1) which might involve both non-exploitative speciesist and multispecies values.

2. To continue to research and advocate for ways in which a multispecies ethic can be implemented into social work practice standards and ethics by integrating multispecies language into influential professional documents and records provide openings for dialogue within the social work profession and with colleagues in the EAP/AAT field.

3. To explore ways to engage with non-human animals in animal assisted practice where ‘I-Thou’ relationships predominate and consequently where there is no exploitation. This may include ensuring non-human animals are not used in therapy settings where there is any risk they may not be freely choosing such involvement.
8.0 Epilogue

During the research, which has taken close to three years part time to complete, my heart has broken. Personally and professionally I will never be the same. My personal life has completely changed from when I started this research, I have experienced marginalization, oppression and discrimination as my ideas unfolded and my ethical and moral value base became clearer. I have greater courage and have greater wisdom. My ability to empathize with other oppressed beings has been advanced to a level where I see the only way forward is a path of embodied awareness, I-Thou and being with each other living soul.

One major learning for me has been the importance of self-care. To ensure we can bring our full present, embodied selves to our work in being with as social workers, we must start by practicing this with ourselves. Whatever this means to each individual will be different, however I believe this is where the root of all oppression and marginalization lies, regardless of species. If someone is feeling powerless and shame it is more likely they will feel the need to oppress others in order to regain some personal power. Therefore, the role of supervision, mentorship and formal and informal support networks is crucial in moving forward into a moral baseline of vegan living. Just as feminism is about inclusion of all genders, veganism is about nonviolence towards all beings and species. Therefore, if veganism is ones moral baseline and people do not have professional supervision to reflect on their practice the result might be a spoken discourse of veganism, but not an embodied being with the values and ethics of veganism.
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