

Critical Lens: Power Structure in Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

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About Me

- Believe the Power of Stories
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About Me

- 2003: Incorporated my dog into a play therapy room
- 2005: Finished my thesis with my therapy dog
- 2010: Finished animal-assisted therapy applications I course at University of North Texas; Finished Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) part 1 training
- 2011: Finished “Techniques in Therapeutic Riding” at Colorado State University
- 2012: Finished Equine Guided Education (EGE) Level 1 and Level 2 Training
- 2012-: Work on my dissertation in equine assisted psychotherapy₃ (EAP)



Where do I come from?



Taiwan



Purpose of the Presentation

- Explore power structure in therapeutic theories and skills
- Explore power structure in research paradigm
- Explore power structure in language
- Explore power structure in social work mission



Purpose of the Presentation

- Help raise the awareness of educators and practitioners regarding academic and social work/counseling practice and the role that each member of the social work/counseling profession play- consciously or unconsciously- in oppressing the practice of AAT
- Help AAT practitioners to identify themselves
- Help other people to identify AAT practitioners' position in the mental health area.



Why Critical Paradigm

- Critical theory was inspired by Sigmund Freud's theory. Freud emphasized that the constant struggle between personal desires and social expectations provides a clue to realize the nature of society and the dynamics of domination and liberation (Giroux, 1982)
- Critical thoughts are the precondition for human freedom (Giroux, 1982)



In the Path of AAT

- Ambivalent feelings

- Full of passion (**personal desire**)

- “This is something that I want to practice right now and in my future.”

- Uncertain (**social expectation**)

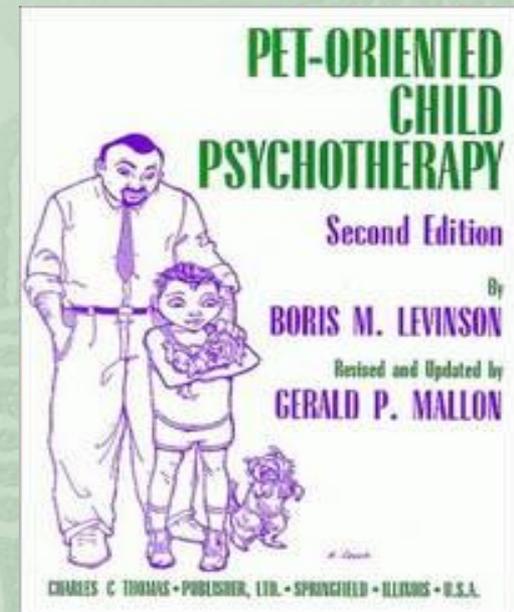
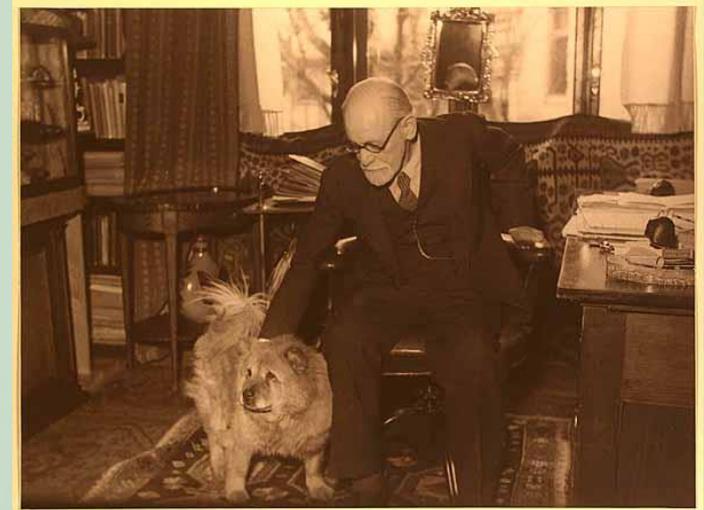
- “ I am novice. How can I show and persuade someone that what I do is creative and meaningful?”

- Afraid of being different and being judged (**social expectation**)



In the Path of AAT

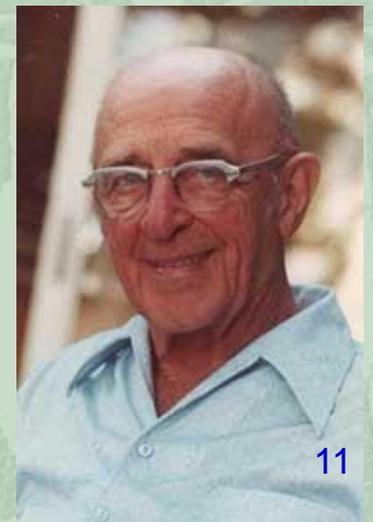
- Seek support from authorities
 - 1) Psychodynamic analyst: Sigmund Freud with his chow-chow, Jo-Fi.
 - 2) Psychodynamic child psychologist: Boris Levinson with his dog, Jingles



(1997)

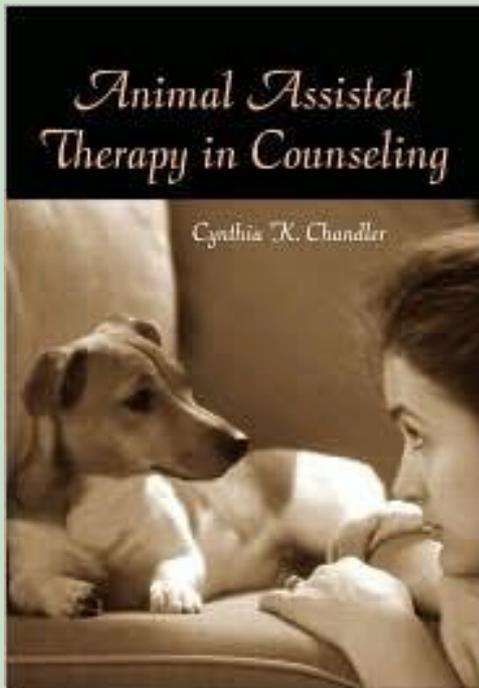
Power Structure in Therapeutic Theories and Skills

- Boris Levinson, the father of pet-oriented child psychotherapy, presented “pet therapy” at the annual American Psychological Association Conference in 1961.
- Reaction: Carl Rogers, one of the most influential American psychologists at that time, described that clients’ positive response to dogs is a general reaction, and he resisted the idea that pet therapy was a new set of psychotherapeutic skills (Levinson & Mallon, 1997).

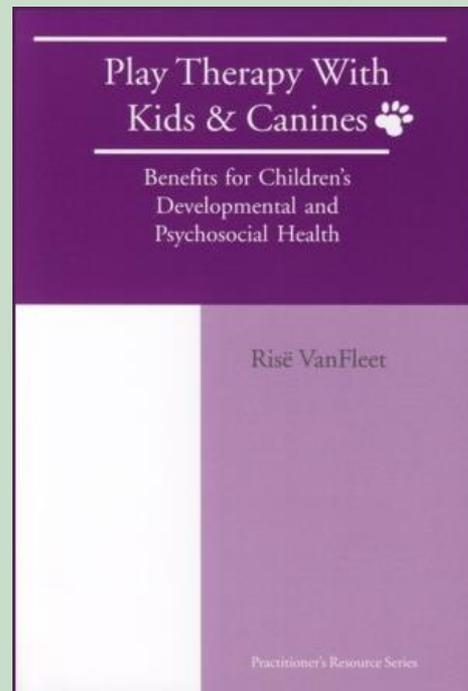


In the Path of AAT

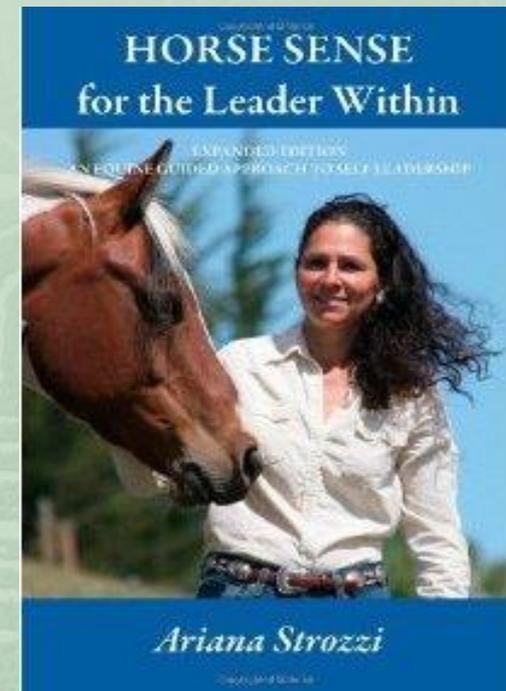
- Seek support group: study in US
 - 1) Cynthia Chandler: University of North Texas
 - 2) Rise VanFleet
 - 3) Ariana Strozzi



(2008)



(2005)



(2011)

Power Structure in Research Paradigm

- 12th Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association → (EAGALA) annual conference in 2011: Quantitative research evidence-based practice (**social expectation**)
- 13th EAGALA annual conference: Qualitative research → How does change occur in equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP)? What are horses' roles in EAP? (**personal desire**)
- 14th EAGALA annual conference: Quantitative research (**social expectation**)



Power Structure in Research Paradigm

Quantitative research is more preferred than qualitative research.

- Positivist and postpositivist paradigms are dominant paradigms.
E.g. psychology department



Power Structure in Research Paradigm

- Gap between theory and practice:

Guba (1996) shared his intense struggle when he wanted to shift his research paradigm from positivism to constructivism.

“ I began to suspect that scientific generalization might not be just the right thing to draw on in solving practical problems, that there existed a major gap between theory and practice” (pp. 43-44).



Power Structure in Research Paradigm

“I was almost laughed off the podium. Good friends took me aside to warn that I needed to begin damage control immediately, for I might have ruined my career with my unscientific proposals” (p. 44)

“It was soon replaced by new feelings of doubt, insecurity, and anxiety. I began to wonder whether I might be leading interested colleagues, and especially students, down a primrose path, making it difficult for them to get jobs, to be published, or to be promoted...” (p. 46)



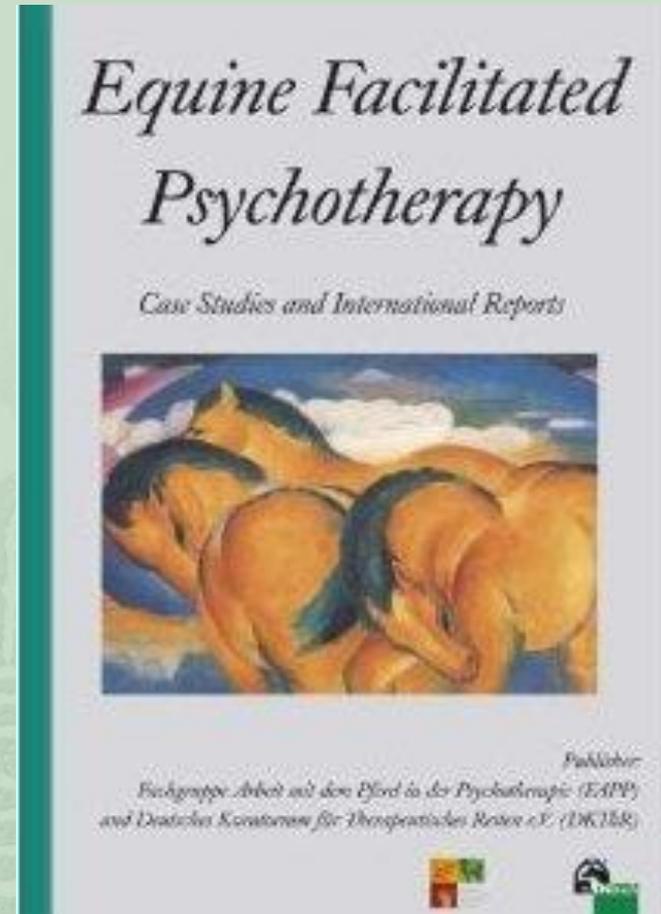
Power Structure in Research Paradigm

- Kuhn (1996) said, “ Since no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines, and since no two paradigms leave all the same problems unsolved. Paradigm debates always involve the question: Which problem is it more significant to have solved?” (p. 110)
- Research problems → research paradigm
- Quantitative methods should not always dominate, and qualitative methods should not be marginalized.



Power Structure in Language

- English is the tool.
- Taiwan: 10 years ago, I could not find any articles or books which were written in Traditional Chinese.
- Equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) is developed more creatively and diversely in Europe. Since European languages are more diverse and fewer people understand each other's language, it is harder for them to spread their knowledge around the world.



Power Structure in Social Work Mission

- I feel uneasy and distanced from the social work program when I use the terms AAT or EAP.
- The practice of therapy and psychotherapy make up a small part of the social work profession.
- Has social work abandoned their mission of promoting community-based social care and enhancing social justice?
- Could psychotherapy help social workers deal with great social problems?



Our Journeys in AAT

- Lonely journey → seek support → develop self-identity → more confidence



- Lonely journey → confidence → develop self-identity more →

- What is your journey in AAT?



Questions

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