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**A SURVEY OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR ATTITUDES REGARDING ANIMAL-
ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS**

BY

SARA MORROW

B.A., Elmira College, 2004

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Counseling

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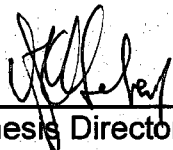
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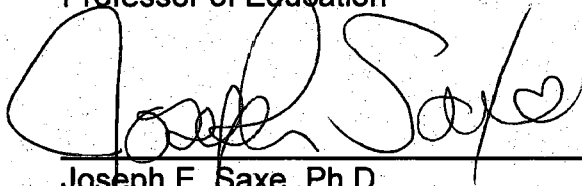
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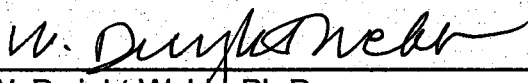
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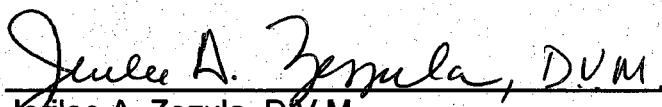
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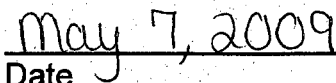
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ABSTRACT
SURVEY OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR ATTITUDES REGARDING
ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS

by

Sara Morrow

University of New Hampshire, May 2009

Though animal-assisted interventions (AAI) have been used in many institutional settings, there is little evidence of AAI use in public schools. This study examined attitudes of school counselors regarding the incorporation of AAI into their practice.

The Pet Attitude Scale Modified (PAS-M) was used to measure attitudes towards animals and was incorporated into an online survey containing items addressing knowledge, interest, and perception of benefits and challenges associated with AAI. A sample of 220 public school counselors completed the online survey. Most considered themselves knowledgeable about AAI (73%), approximately half were interested in using AAI (56%), “reducing stress and anxiety” and “allergies” were the most frequently identified benefit and challenge (86% and 84%, respectively). Positive attitudes towards animals were associated with an interest in utilizing AAI.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jane was withdrawn, depressed, and virtually unreachable by the adults and peers who were trying to help her. That is when Niki came along. Niki was a four-legged ball of unconditional love. Through her relationship with her canine companion, Jane's confidence and self-esteem grew to the point where she was able to reconnect with caring friends and adults.

Savannah had been abused at a young age and now, in her teen years, was very distrustful of and hostile towards adults. Talking to someone about her problems was not something that came easily to Savannah. In the barn, however, her tough shell melted away as she brushed the large horses. Talking came easily as she rode them around the ring.

Purpose

Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) have been used in a number of institutional settings (e.g., Barker & Dawson, 1998; Beck & Katcher, 1996; Arkow 2004) but little has been written about the incorporation of AAI into the specific institution of public schools.

The purpose of this study was to assess public school counselors' knowledge of, attitudes towards, and interest in incorporating AAI into their practice. This researcher also sought to identify the salience of potential benefits and challenges of AAI as determined by school counselors.

This study contributed to the field by facilitating the process of integrating animals into school counseling and promoting awareness of AAI as a counseling intervention. Having a better understanding of what counselors perceive as challenges to the process will help aspiring practitioners create an implementation plan that addresses those challenges and promotes the identified benefits.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examines the following questions and hypotheses:

- How much do school counselors know about AAI?
 - It was hypothesized that few counselors would consider themselves knowledgeable regarding the use of AAI.
- Are school counselors interested in using AAI?
 - It was hypothesized that at least half of respondents would be interested in using AAI.
- What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling?
 - This researcher hypothesized the most salient benefit would be an improvement in social skills and the most salient challenge would be support from administration.
- Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in utilizing AAI?

- This researcher hypothesized counselors who are interested in using AAI will have a more positive attitude towards animals.

Background and Rationale

Much has been written about the use of AAI in institutional settings (Arkow 2004; Barker & Dawson, 1998; Beck & Katcher, 1996; Walsh & Martin, 1994). There is little evidence regarding the integration of AAI into the specific institution of public school. There are programs that incorporate AAI by way of field trips or visiting professionals (Katcher & Teumer, 2006; Katcher & Wilkins, 2000) but few professionals have written about the therapeutic use of animals in school counseling practice (Nebbe, 1991).

Abdill and Juppe (1997) describe six types of AAI: full-time resident pets (pets that live at the institution); full-time visiting pets (pets that are brought in daily by a staff member); periodic pet visitation; animal contact from outside trips (such as zoos or farms); animal contact in the natural environment (such as watching a bird feeder); and plush animals.

Many types of animals are used in AAI. They range in size from hamsters to horses and everything in between. The Delta Society, a leading AAI organization, has a program called Pet Partners that trains people and evaluates and registers human/animal teams to conduct AAI. Registered animals include dogs, cats, rabbits, goats, miniature pigs, and birds (Delta Society, 2008). AAI has been used in hospitals, correctional facilities, hospice programs, nursing

homes, psychiatric facilities, residential treatment facilities, and schools (Delta Society, 2008).

There is a wealth of anecdotal data that describe the benefits of AAI (Nebbe, 1991; Wells, 2004; King, 1998; Fine, 2006). In addition to anecdotal data, research shows AAI having positive outcomes in regard to the development of interpersonal skills (Kogan, Granger, Fitchett, Helmer, & Young, 1999; Mallon, 1994). Animals have been correlated with increases in overall health by reducing anxiety (Barker & Dawson, 1998), enhancing self-esteem (Walsh & Martin, 1994), reducing blood pressure (Cusack & Smith, 1984), and living longer (Beck & Katcher, 1996).

Some describe the effectiveness of AAI in relation to the biophilia hypothesis (Melson & Fine, 2006) and social support theory (McNicholas & Collis, 2006). According to the biophilia hypothesis, humans have a genetic predisposition to attend to and be attracted by other living things. In other words, AAI works because humans are naturally drawn to animals. McNicholas and Collis (2006) examine the concept of social support as a major factor in the success of AAI. In other words, AAI works because animals have a supportive function.

The field of AAI is growing. The Delta Society provides Pet Partner certification in nearly all fifty states as well as Italy, Canada, and the Netherlands. Institutions like the University of Pennsylvania, Purdue University, and the University of California at Berkeley have research centers dedicated to understanding the relationship between humans and animals. Dr. Aubrey Fine

published the first textbook on AAI in 2000. In 2004, Phil Arkow released the ninth edition of his bibliography on AAI. This bibliography references hundreds of articles related to AAI. The Delta Society has published a number of resource guides to assist those who wish to incorporate animals into a variety of settings, including schools. This researcher believes the data gathered through this study helps to promote awareness of and interest in AAI.

Definition of Terms and Concepts

One challenge in researching the therapeutic use of animals is the variety of terms used to describe the same or similar phenomenon. Terms include: animal-assisted therapy, animal-assisted activities, pet therapy, pet psychotherapy, pet-facilitated therapy, pet-facilitated psychotherapy, four-footed therapy, animal-facilitated counseling, companion-animal therapy, and co-therapy with an animal (LaJoie, 2003, as cited in Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p.22). In addition, there are numerous terms specific to the therapeutic use of horses.

This study used the term animal-assisted intervention (AAI) to refer to all types of activities that incorporate animals to promote positive outcomes.

Methodology

Online self-report surveys were distributed to public school counselors listed in the 2008-2009 New Hampshire School Counselor Association directory. Surveys included items developed by this researcher as well as items from the Pet Attitude Scale – Modified (PAS-M) (Templer, Salter, Dickey, Baldwin, & Veleber, 1981; Munsell, Canfield, Templer, Tangan, & Arikawa, 2004). A detailed discussion of methodology is included in Chapter 3.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher assumed that self-report is a valid source of information. It was assumed that counselor survey responses were truthful and accurately reflected their knowledge of AAI and attitudes towards animals.

Scope and Locale

This study utilized a sample of 220 school counselors in New Hampshire. Public schools with grade levels kindergarten through 12 were included. Research was conducted during the Fall 2008 to Spring 2009 academic year.

Potential limitations of this study include selection bias. Participants were self-selected, which may have created a bias in the sample population. Self-selection may lead to a sample population of individuals who feel strongly about AAI.

Another potential limitation has to do with the use of technology to administer the survey. Utilizing an online survey may result in a bias towards counselors in more affluent schools. Not every school counselor uses email and not every school district can afford computers for each counselor. Also, some counselors may lack computer competency and therefore be unable to access an online survey.

Finally, the sample population represents a small fraction of school counselors. In order for results to be generalized, a larger and more diverse sample population should be used.

Significance

This researcher sought to generate knowledge regarding the attitudes of school counselors in relation to AAI. This study also generates knowledge regarding the relationship between attitudes towards animals and interest in utilizing AAI in professional practice.

Knowledge generated by this research helps aspiring practitioners develop programs informed by the most salient benefits and challenges of AAI as identified by school counselors. This research also promotes awareness of AAI as a therapeutic tool.

Summary

Animal-assisted interventions (AAI) include all types of activities that incorporate animals to promote positive outcomes. There is much evidence to support the use of AAI in institutional settings, but little has been written about AAI in the institution of schools and specifically in school counseling practice. The purpose of this study was to assess school counselor attitudes toward and interest in the incorporation of AAI into school counseling practice. The following chapters describe background research of AAI, survey outcomes, and a discussion of those outcomes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review includes data about the benefits and challenges of implementing an AAI program. These data were used in the creation of the online survey. Data from this literature review were also used in the introduction and informed consent sections in order to increase counselor awareness of AAI.

Many researchers describe the use of AAI with school-aged children in settings outside of the typical public school environment (Arkow 2004; Barker & Dawson, 1998; Beck & Katcher, 1996; Walsh & Mertin, 1994). There are fewer researchers who describe the use of AAI in school counseling practice (Nebbe, 1991).

This review of literature is organized by the following categories: types of AAI, benefits of AAI, theories regarding the effectiveness of AAI, and logistics of AAI implementation.

Types of Animal Assisted Interventions

Various forms of AAI have been used in hospitals, correctional facilities, hospice programs, nursing homes, psychiatric facilities, residential treatment facilities, and schools (Delta Society, 2008). Many types of animals are used in AAI. These animals include dogs, cats, rabbits, goats, miniature pigs, and birds (Delta Society, 2008). The term pocket pet is used to describe small animals such as hamsters, gerbils, and mice (Morrison, 2007).

Animals used for AAI may be full-time residents in a facility or full- or part-time visitors. Animal contact may also come from outside trips, such as zoos or farms, or the natural environment, such as watching a bird feeder (Abdill and Juppe, 1997).

Benefits of Animal Assisted Interventions

Chandler (2005) encourages the use of AAI with clients who may be “discouraged, unmotivated, resistant, or defiant or who have poor self-insight, deficits in social skills, or barriers to developing relationships” (p.13). For some counselors, this may describe the majority of their client population.

Chandler notes that professionals who choose to utilize and promote AAI may face resistance and criticism from their peers because AAI is a relatively new treatment modality and there is not an abundance of empirical evidence to support its efficacy. Nonetheless, Chandler encourages professionals to become involved in the field.

Benefits of AAI fall into the categories of stress and anxiety reduction, social skills and behavior, and enhanced self-image. Other benefits are described below:

Stress and Anxiety Reduction

Barker and Dawson (1998) examined the efficacy of AAI in reducing anxiety for psychiatric patients. They used a pre- and post-treatment crossover study design to compare AAI with traditional therapeutic recreation sessions. Anxiety was measured using the state scale of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. The researchers found statistically significant reductions in anxiety scores after

AAI for patients with a variety of psychiatric diagnoses, while traditional therapeutic recreation was associated with reduced levels only for patients with mood disorders.

The results of this study are intriguing, though one may note the Hawthorne effect as a potential methodological error. Perhaps the patients responded well because of the novelty of the treatment, not because of the inherent value in the treatment itself. Regardless, this study provides evidence that AAI may contribute to anxiety reduction.

Beck and Katcher (1996) studied the role of a tropical fish aquarium in reducing anxiety and discomfort of adult patients awaiting dental surgery. They found that watching the fish was as effective as hypnosis in reducing anxiety.

Friedmann (2000) studied the role of canine interaction in reducing blood pressure in adults. The researcher determined whether each participant had a more positive or more negative attitude toward dogs, then measured blood pressure as the participant read aloud in the presence of an unfamiliar dog. Friedmann found that adults with more positive attitudes toward dogs experienced significantly lower blood pressure when reading aloud in the presence of the dog. McNicholas and Collis (2006) also note that the benefits one gains from AAI may be influenced by prior animal experience. Some people may be better candidates for AAI than others.

Social Skills and Behavior

Levine and Bohn (1986, as cited in Nebbe, 1991) found that children learned skills like patience and temper control through animal interaction. Nebbe

(1991) observes similar skill acquisition in her work with elementary school students. Kotrschal and Ortbauer (2003) studied the behavioral effects of introducing a dog to an elementary school classroom. They found the presence of the dog to positively stimulate social cohesion among the children as aggressiveness and hyperactivity decreased. They also found that the students paid more attention to the teacher.

Katcher and Wilkins (2000) documented the attention-getting and calming aspects of AAI in their "companionable zoo" study. In this study, conduct disordered adolescent boys in a residential treatment center were randomly assigned to either an Outward Bound nature program or a zoo program where they learned to care for a variety of animals. Over a six-month period, there was not a single episode at the zoo program where a boy had to be physically restrained. Baseline data indicated that the boys had previously needed to be restrained at least 35 times over a six-month period. Boys in the Outward Bound program did not experience a reduction in physical restraint incidences. The zoo experiment also showed an increase in focused attention and calm behavior.

Katcher and Teumer (2006) furthered the above study by including teachers from the children's school in an AAI nature program. Participants were public school children receiving special education services. The program was held on a working farm and served children in the surrounding school districts. Students came to the farm one day a week for a two-hour session. Students had diagnoses such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and emotional disability (ED). Students had the choice to interact with animals like

cats, birds, rabbits, ferrets, rats, fish, pigs, and llamas. Before interacting with the animal, the student had to fulfill requirements for a "license" which involved acquisition of skills and knowledge specific to each animal. The researchers gathered data about the students' behavior over the course of four years. They found a significant difference in behaviors for place (farm versus school) but not for time. Essentially, the students exhibited a number of positive behavioral changes on the farm, but those changes did not generalize to the school environment. The boys' aggressive behaviors continued to be a problem in other environments like dorms and classrooms. After six months, the classroom teachers started to see a reduction in aggressive behaviors, but the change was slow to generalize from the zoo to other contexts. Katcher and Teumer (2006) conclude that animal interaction and nature study provide an environment that elicits more adaptive behavior than the traditional classroom environment. They also conclude that the environment that includes animal interaction decreases the occurrence of students' disruptive behavior while they are in that environment.

Self-esteem

MacDonald (2004) examined the effect of equine-facilitated therapy (a form of AAI using horses) on client characteristics including self-esteem, depression, locus of control, loneliness, empathy, and aggression. A summary of empirical research from five programs found no significant differences. This may have been due to challenges with sample size. However, when taken separately,

two of the programs produced statistically significant results in self-esteem, locus of control, and aggression.

Other Benefits

Kruger, Trachtenberg, and Serpell (2004) report key findings from a conference, workshop, and literature review that included a number of experts in the fields of AAI and child and adolescent mental health. Included in the key findings is an indication that AAI may have a range of benefits such as reducing anxiety; improving rapport; enhancing attendance at, compliance with, and retention in therapy; serving as a catalyst for learning, modeling positive social behavior, and bolstering staff morale.

Bolstering staff morale is highly valuable as counseling is a field in which professionals are encouraged to be mindful of self-care in order to prevent burnout. Integrating AAI may serve to fulfill this need while providing benefits to clients as well. Kruger, Trachtenberg, and Serpell (2004) note that improving staff morale may have a positive impact on the quality of client care.

Arkow (2004) notes additional benefits that AAI can have for an institution. These benefits include improving treatment milieu, increasing public awareness of the institution as AAI volunteers help expand community outreach, and enhancing security in institutions that choose to have residential animals such as dogs.

Mallon (1994) incorporated farm animals into therapeutic interactions with children with emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties. Mallon reported that the animals served to enhance the therapeutic alliance and help the children

to speak more openly. Children reported that they could speak to the animals without fear that what they said would be repeated and that they visited the animals to feel better when they were sad or angry.

Fine (2006) describes how a therapeutic office can be altered by the presence of animals and other living things. In reference to the biophilia hypothesis that people have an affinity towards living things, the introduction of the natural world into the constructed environment of an office may help people to feel more at ease. It should be noted that biophilia does not view animals as superior to other elements of the natural world – some people may feel a stronger affinity towards plants and others for animals, therefore including all of these elements in the therapeutic milieu may increase the comfort of the client.

Theories Regarding Effectiveness of Animal Assisted Interventions

Kreuger, Trachtenberg, and Serpell (2004) describe the effectiveness of AAI in terms of the following ideas and concepts: animals as social facilitators, animals as symbols and metaphors, animals as sources of social support, and animals as learning instruments.

Gonski, Peacock, and Ruckert (1986, as cited in Nebbe, 1991) empirically demonstrate the role of animal as social facilitator. They conducted interviews with adolescent juvenile offenders in a residential facility. They had dogs present at half of the 40 interviews. In all of the interviews with the dog present, the juvenile offenders responded with less hostility and increased openness as evidenced by a significantly higher number of responses (280 compared to 40 without the dog present).

Animals have long been associated with rich metaphor and symbolism. Children learn morals and values through story characters like Peter Rabbit, The Ugly Duckling, and Clifford the Big Red Dog. Kreuger, Trachtenberg, and Serpell (2004) propose that animals are effective vehicles for the projection of unpleasant or uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. The substitution of animal characters for human ones facilitates the discussion of emotionally-charged topics and issues. Nebbe (1991) notes how her students project their feelings upon the animals she incorporates into her school counseling practices. For example, a student struggling with shyness said that the hamster felt scared around new people.

McNicholas and Collis (2006) researched the role of animals as social supports in order to describe the efficacy of AAI. They conducted a longitudinal study with subjects experiencing spousal bereavement. Results of their study indicate that pet ownership provided relief from feelings of loneliness as well as an outlet for emotions that may not be easily expressed. The researchers expanded their examination beyond pet ownership to include interactions with therapy animals through AAI. They note how therapy animals often provide indirect social support as they facilitate social contact with others. For example, a resident in a nursing home who is receiving AAI may find other residents attracted to the animal and therefore have an opportunity for human social interaction.

Allen, Blascovich, Tomaka, and Kelsey (1991) examined the role of human and animal companions in reducing physiological responses to stress in

women. They found the presence of the dog to have a greater moderating effect than the human companion. The researchers postulate that the degree to which the subjects felt evaluated by their companions influenced reactivity to stress. This study speaks to the commonly articulated experience that animals act as social supports by providing nonjudgmental companionship.

Melson and Fine (2006) discuss the biophilia hypothesis, or the idea that people have an innate interest in living things and people evolved to respond to animals as environmental cues of safety or danger. This hypothesis implies that a calm and friendly animal may help to convey the message that the therapeutic setting is a safe place. The calm-animal indicator may help the child to feel more at ease. Melson and Fine describe animals as slipping “under the radar of human defense mechanisms” (p. 211). They speculate that the child’s defensive reaction is less likely to be aroused by an animal stimulus than a human one and therefore may help the client to move past defensiveness to access underlying issues.

In support of the concept of animals as instruments of learning, Fredrickson and DePrekel (2004) challenge the common expression that animals provide unconditional love, noting that an animal’s response to people is influenced by non-verbal cues such as eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, gestures, and intensity of emotional state. They refer to this process as contingent collaborative communication—positive interaction is contingent on communication between animal and human. They note that this is part of the way that AAI helps adolescents learn to self-regulate. Through AAI, the adolescent

has an opportunity to practice emotional communication and self-regulation of non-verbal communication cues.

Nebbe (1991) speculates that part of the effectiveness of AAI comes from the safe, accepting, affectionate, honest, and consistent relationship between human and animal. These qualities help to fulfill the basic human need of feeling loved and worthwhile. Though the evidence is anecdotal, Nebbe's story is echoed throughout the AAI literature.

The effectiveness of AAI can be described in terms of various roles of the animal: social facilitator, symbol and metaphor, a source of social support, and a learning instrument.

Logistics of Implementation

Abdill and Juppe (1997) describe the implementation of a number of AAI programs. In 1990, they distributed a survey about AAI programs at workshops and conventions. They received 21 completed surveys from residential facilities serving a range of age and ability groups. The survey examined reasons for implementing the program, how the program was implemented, sources of support, program goals, program benefits, problems experienced, what would be done differently, and a program summary.

Program benefits include: response from clients who are typically confused or uninterested; increased verbalization; love shown by clients who are generally unable to express in other ways; calming effect on loud or angry clients; a sense of usefulness and self-esteem for clients; and unconditional love shown by animals. Challenges included animal upkeep, figuring out which clients

were not interested or afraid of the animals, and maintaining the animal's health as many of the animals in residential centers were fed excessive amounts of treats.

Abdill and Juppe's (1997) survey provides a framework for structuring a survey to be distributed to school counselors and administrators in schools that currently incorporate animals in therapeutic ways. The survey also provides anecdotal data around the benefits and challenges of using AAI in an institutional setting.

Nebbe (1991) describes ways to integrate the human-animal bond into the elementary school counseling curriculum. She notes that using animals helps to establish rapport, build trust, boost self-esteem, teach social skills, and promote an atmosphere of respect and caring. Nebbe integrates animals into her one-on-one work in the office as well as into her classroom guidance presentations.

Chandler (2005) describes the process and benefits of establishing a school-based program for AAI. According to Chandler, the first step is to write a proposal that includes goals, expected benefits, activities, credentialing requirements, and potential risks and proposed methods for risk management. In addition to the proposal, a set of policies and procedures should be developed. Chandler suggests including items like procedures for informed consent, procedures for keeping the work environment clean, animal handling procedures, grooming code for animals, and appropriate behavior code for human and animal participants. Chandler also suggests making available a video showing AAI in action in order to increase knowledge and awareness in the school community.

Chandler emphasizes the importance of engaging all relevant personnel in the process, noting that failure to inform people may create road blocks for the program as some may feel confused about its purpose or fear that it will create more work for them.

Conclusions

AAI is used in a variety of settings with an array of client populations. Benefits include stress and anxiety reduction, improved social skills and behavior, enhanced self-image, and improved therapeutic alliance and milieu. The effectiveness of AAI can be described in terms of various roles of the animal: social facilitator, symbol and metaphor, a source of social support, and a learning instrument. When implementing an AAI program, one should consider logistics such as animal upkeep and training, procedures for accidents or injuries, and engagement of all relevant personnel.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes research design, participants, instrumentation, and procedure used to gather data. In order to assess attitudes toward and interest in incorporating AAI in school counseling, this researcher sent online surveys to school counselors throughout New Hampshire.

Research Design

This quantitative study examined the attitudes of school counselors in regards to AAI. Online self-report surveys were used to gather data. Self-report surveys are a valid approach because this researcher aimed to gather data regarding attitudes and opinions of participants. The online format was an effective approach as it allowed this researcher to access a large population in an economical fashion.

Participants

Participants were school counselors working in New Hampshire. Using the New Hampshire School Counselor 2008-2009 Annual Directory, the researcher created a contact list of nearly 800 public school counselors. In order to minimize cost and increase response rates, participants were contacted via email.

After one week, the researcher received 220 completed surveys from a range of elementary, middle, and high school counselors. Because there are

generally more school counselors at the high school level, it was expected that a larger proportion of surveys would come from that demographic.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered using a modified version of the Pet Attitude Scale (PAS-M) (Templer, Salter, Dickey, Baldwin, & Veleber, 1981; Munsell, Canfield, Templer, Tangan, & Arikawa, 2004) with permission from author Donald Templer. In addition, this researcher generated items to address research questions. Survey items that relate to specific research questions are identified below in relation to the question they address:

- How much do school counselors know about AAI?
 - Item 24: "I have not heard of animal-assisted interventions used as a therapeutic tool." Rated on seven-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."
 - Item 25: "I am knowledgeable about the therapeutic use of animals." Rated on seven-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."
 - Item 26: "Animal interaction is a valuable therapeutic tool." Rated on seven-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."
- Are school counselors interested in using AAI?
 - Item 23: "Please choose the statement that best describes you: I use animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, I am interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, I am

not interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor.”

- What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling?
 - Item 27: “Please rank these potential benefits of animal interaction in terms of their usefulness in your work as a school counselor: Reduce stress and anxiety, improve social skills, decrease disruptive behavior, improve student-counselor rapport, increase self-esteem, improve staff morale.” Rated on seven-point scale from “Extremely Useless” to “Extremely Useful.” Space provided for respondents to describe “other potential benefits.”
 - Item 28: “Please rank these potential challenges of implementing animal-assisted interventions in terms of how difficult they would be to overcome in your work setting: Support from administration, support from staff, allergies, care of animal, legal issues, cost.” Rated on seven-point scale from “Extremely Difficult” to “Extremely Easy.” Space provided for respondents to describe “other potential benefits.”
- Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in utilizing AAI?
 - Item 23: “Please choose the statement that best describes you: I use animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, I am interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, I am

not interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor.”

- Items 5 through 22 are the 18 items of the PAS-M (Appendix A.) These items were scored and used to determine respondent's attitude towards animals.

Surveys were administered using SurveyMonkey, a reputable online survey service found at www.surveymonkey.com. Though this tool is convenient and cost-effective, it may have created a bias in respondents according to comfort with technology. The researcher felt it was worth the risk because the convenience of the tool was likely responsible for greater participation overall.

The PAS-M is one of the few published scales with reliability information (Cronbach alpha of .93, two-week test-retest stability of .92). It contains three subscales: love and interaction, pets in the home, and joy of pet ownership.

Because this researcher utilized the PAS-M to gain a sense of the respondent's overall attitude towards animals, subscales were not used in this study.

Participants respond based on a seven-point scale. Scores are calculated by summing all responses. A higher score indicates a more positive attitude towards pets. Cut-off scores are not provided to determine categories of attitudes towards pets. As this researcher does, many studies determine level of positive attitude towards pets by comparing PAS-M scores of two or more groups (e.g., Al-Fayez, Awadalla, Templer, & Arikawa, 2003). Screen shots of the online survey are included (Appendix A.) Raw data are available by request.

Procedure

An introductory email was sent to school counselors (Appendix A.) The email contained a brief introduction and a link to the questionnaire. If they accepted the invitation, participants were then taken to an informed consent page before beginning the actual survey. The survey was completed by clicking to select responses, then proceeding to the next page. On the final page, participants were given information about the study and were provided with an opportunity to delete their responses and not submit their surveys. Submitted data were immediately accessible to this researcher. After one week of data collection, the online survey was closed and no further responses were accepted. Data were then downloaded from SurveyMonkey and translated to be used in SPSS.

Data Analysis

The data were examined for a variety themes and trends using descriptive statistic functions of SPSS 17.0. Analyses are described below in relation to the research question addressed:

How much do school counselors know about AAI? The items related to this question were "I am knowledgeable about the therapeutic use of animals." "I have not heard of animal-assisted interventions used as a therapeutic tool."

This researcher ran frequency counts to determine the percentage of counselors with a response of "Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, or Somewhat Agree" versus counselors with a response of "Strongly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, or Somewhat Disagree."

Are school counselors interested in using AAI? This researcher utilized the descriptive analytical tool of frequency counts to determine the number of participants who identified with the statements “I use AAI in my practice as a school counselor” and “I am interested in using AAI in my practice as a school counselor” as compared to participants who identified with the statement “I am not interested in using AAI in my practice as a school counselor.”

What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling? This researcher ran frequency counts in order to determine which potential benefits and challenges of implementing AAI were most frequently ranked as highly beneficial or highly challenging.

Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in utilizing AAI? The relationship between the respondent’s attitudes towards animals and interest in utilizing AAI was examined. First this researcher had to determine each respondent’s total PAS-M score. This was attained by summing items 5-22 (Appendix A.) That total score was then compared to responses from item 23 (Appendix A) using cross-tabulation. Because the dependent variable was ordinal and highly negatively skewed and the variances were unequal, a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare AAI interest and PAS-M scores.

Ethical Considerations

The nature of this survey was such that risk of harm in any form is minimal. This researcher gained approval from the University of New Hampshire

Institutional Review Board prior to conducting research (Appendix B). The subject matter was not controversial or emotionally charged and participants were not required to give identifying information. The survey was conducted on-line via the Web survey hosting organization SurveyMonkey, a secure server with Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol.

Summary

This quantitative study examined the attitudes of school counselors in regards to AAI. Data gathered from online self-report surveys were analyzed using descriptive analytical tools and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. The following chapter contains results of the aforementioned analyses.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results were calculated using SPSS 17.0. Data were downloaded from SurveyMonkey then translated for SPSS compatibility. Demographic data are reported. All other results are grouped by research question: AAI knowledge, AAI interest, attitude toward animals (as determined by PAS-M scores), and perceived benefits and challenges. Anecdotal data are also included.

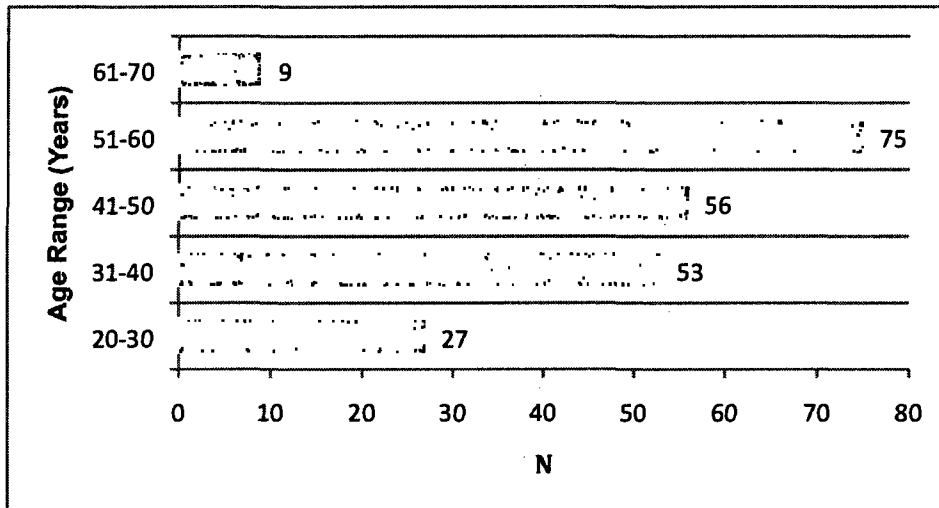
Demographics

The online survey was completed by 220 school counselors. Of those respondents, 61% identified as female, 38% male, and 1% did not identify gender. The most represented age group (34%) were those between the ages of 51-60 while 26% were between 41-50, 24% between 31-40, 12% between 20-30, and 4% were 61-70 years of age (Table 1).

More respondents were school counselors at the high school level (37%, grades 9-12) than at the middle school level (21%, grades 6-8) or at the elementary level (30%, grades K-5). Some counselors (11%) work with more than one level (Table 2). A large majority of respondents (81%) own one or more pets.

Table 1

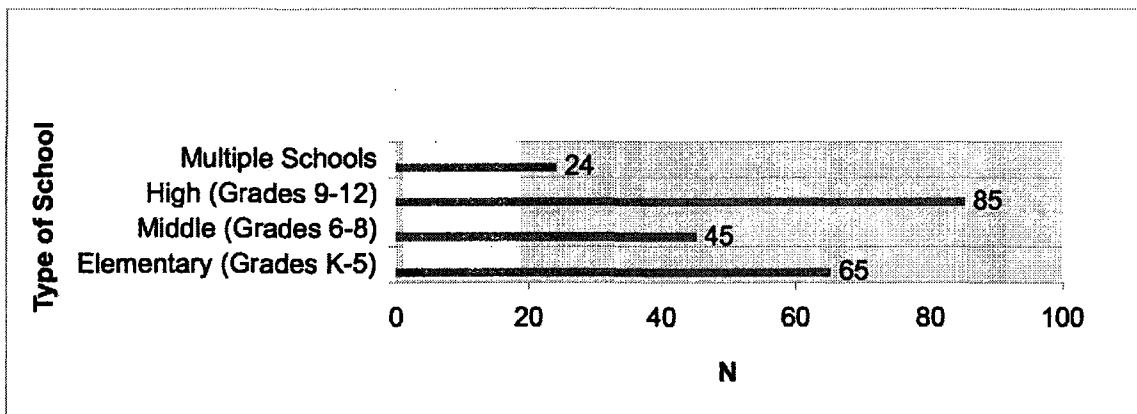
Age



The most represented age range was between 51-60 years.

Table 2

Counselor Work Setting



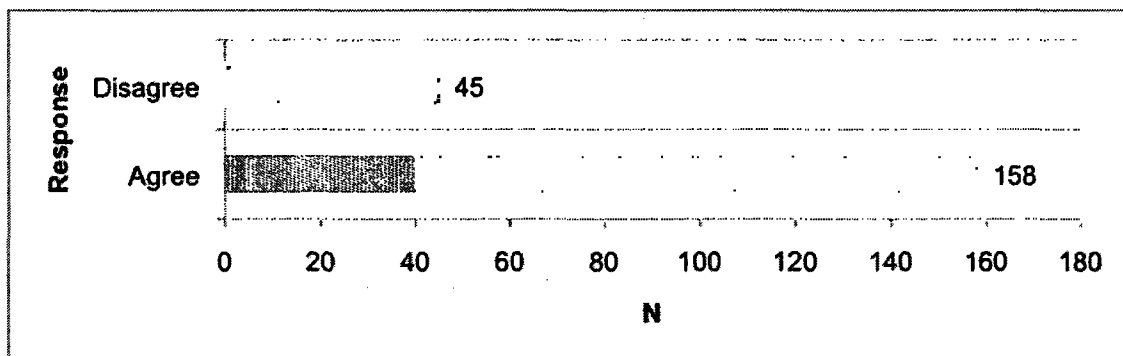
High school counselors represented 37% of the sample population.

Knowledge of Animal Assisted Interventions

How much do school counselors know about AAI? This researcher hypothesized that few counselors would consider themselves knowledgeable in regards to AAI. Survey data do not support this hypothesis. Most respondents (87%) had heard of AAI used as a therapeutic tool and most respondents (73%) consider themselves knowledgeable in regards to the therapeutic use of animals (Table 3)

Table 3

Counselor Knowledge of AAI

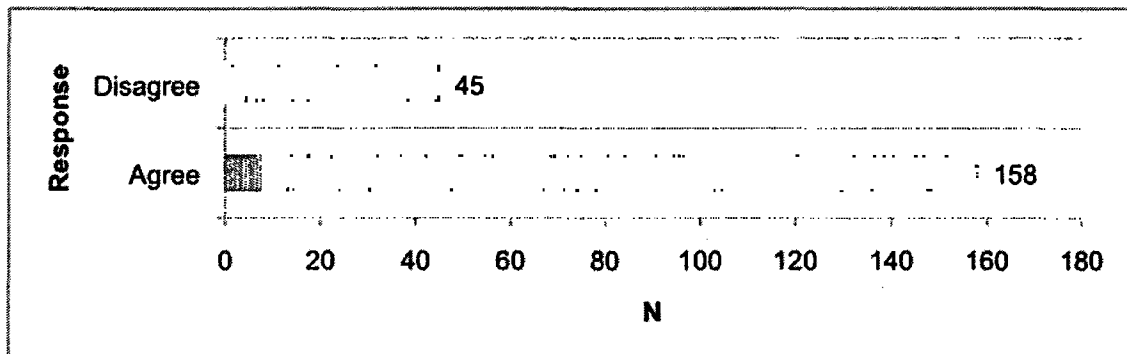


The majority of respondents (73%) agreed on the item, "I am knowledgeable about the therapeutic use of animals."

Interest in Utilizing Animal Assisted Interventions

Are school counselors interested in using AAI? This researcher hypothesized at least half of respondents would be interested in using AAI. Survey data support this hypothesis. A few respondents (6%) already utilize animal assisted interactions in their practice as school counselors. Half of respondents (50%) are interested in using AAI compared to 44% of respondents who are not interested in using AAI (Table 4).

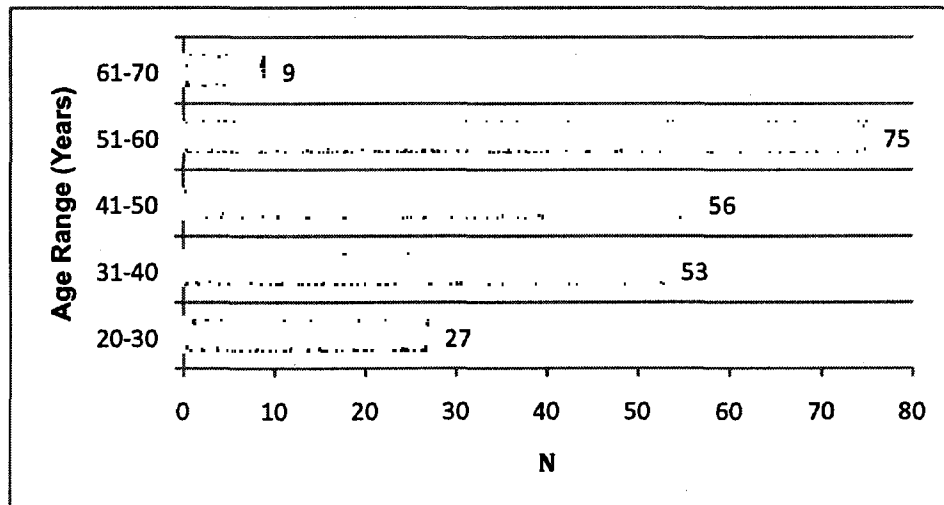
Table 4
Counselor Interest in Using AAI



More respondents (N=110) are interested in using AAI as compared to 97 who are not interested and 13 who already use AAI in their practice.

Nearly all respondents (92%) believe AAI is a valuable therapeutic tool (Table 5).

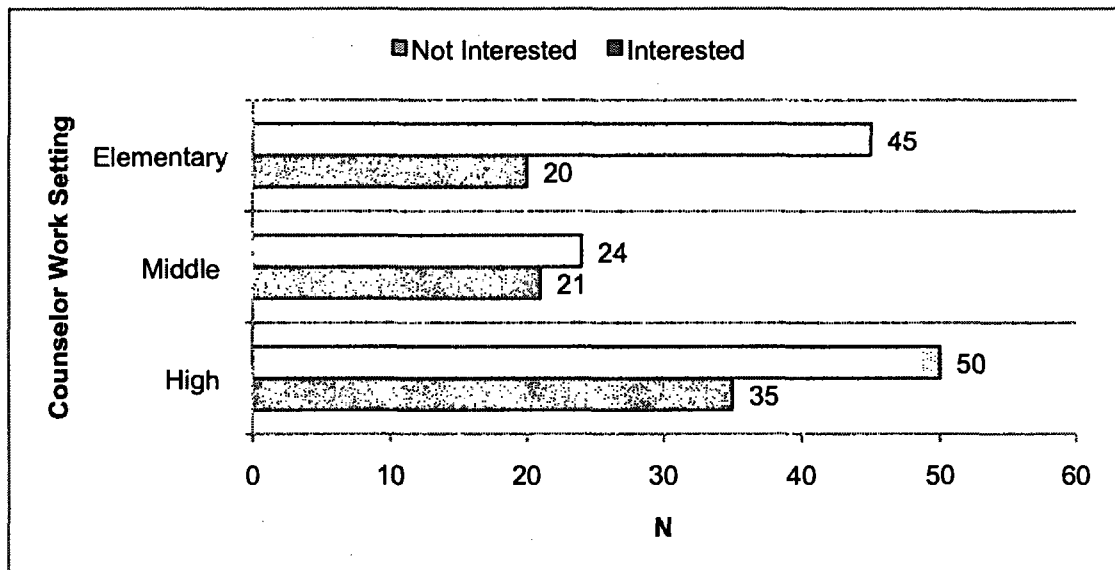
Table 5
Value of AAI as Therapeutic Tool



No respondent disagreed to the item "Animal interaction is a valuable therapeutic tool."

Of the respondents using AAI or indicating an interest in using AAI, 34% were counselors at the high school grade level, 23% were at the middle school level and 43% were counselors at the elementary school level (Table 6).

Table 6
AAI Interest by Work Setting



The majority of respondents interested in using AAI work in an elementary school setting.

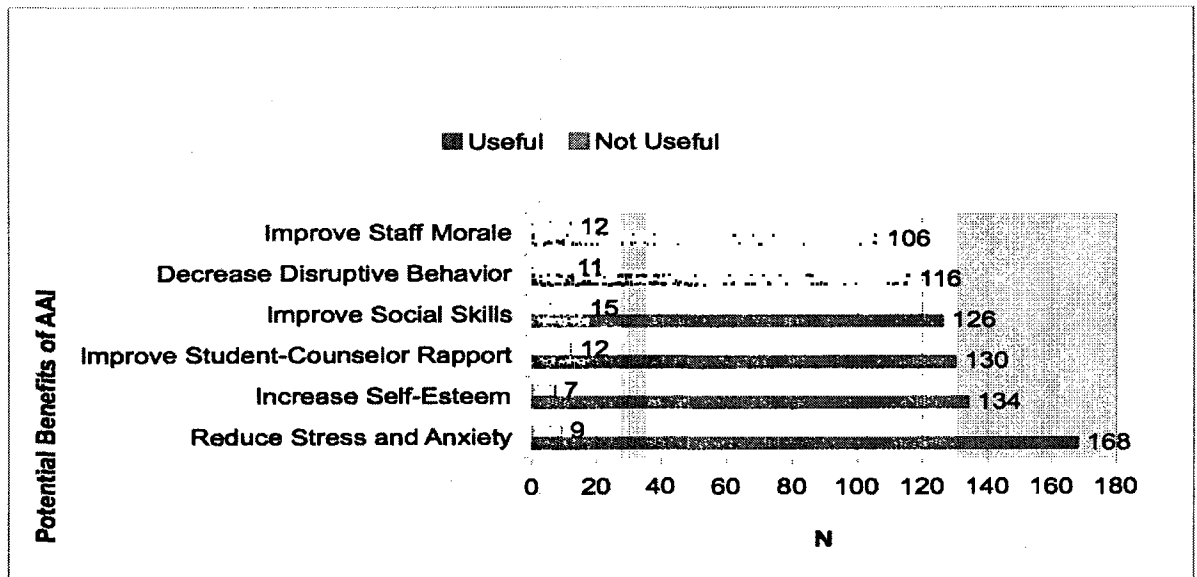
Following the survey item regarding AAI interest, participants were given open response space for comments (Appendix C).

Benefits and Challenges of Implementing Animal Assisted Intervention

What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling? This researcher hypothesized that an improvement in social skills would be the most salient benefit and support from administration would be the most salient challenge. Survey data do not support these hypotheses.

Respondents were asked to rank six potential benefits of AAI in terms of the usefulness in their work as school counselors. In order of most to least positive responses from counselors, they are: Reduce stress and anxiety, increase self-esteem, improve student-counselor rapport, improve social skills, decrease disruptive behavior, and improve staff morale. Of the respondents who completed these items, 86% identified a reduction of stress and anxiety levels as a benefit of AAI that would be useful in their work as school counselors whereas 48% viewed an improvement in staff morale as useful in their work as school counselors (Table 7).

Table 7
Counselor Usefulness Rating of AAI Benefits

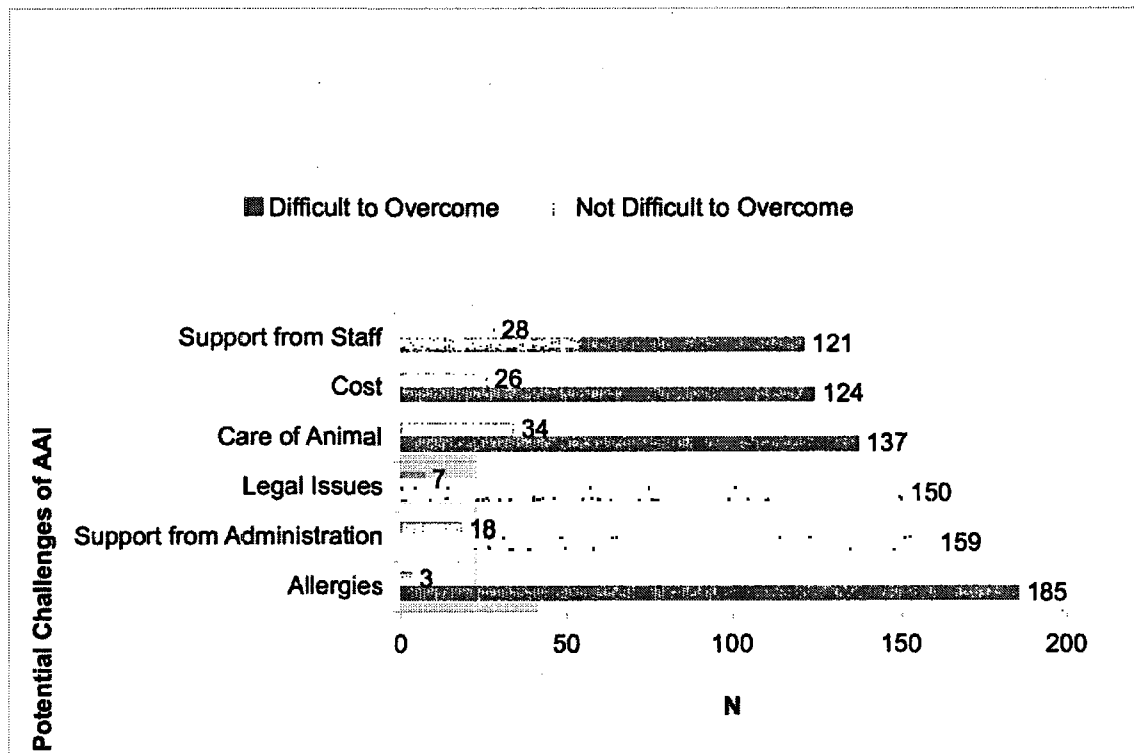


Counselors were asked to rank potential benefits of AAI on a scale from “Extremely Useless” to “Extremely Useful.” Stress and anxiety reduction received the greatest number of “useful” ratings from respondents.

Several (N = 41) participants identified additional benefits which included: using dogs to help students with reading, AAI can provide an external focus and allows students to unload their deepest feelings, responsibility, self-control, motivation, promote student-to-student interaction, help with loss and grieving, self-care, understanding emotions, and reducing anger (Appendix D).

Respondents ranked six potential challenges of implementing AAI in terms of how difficult they would be to overcome in their work settings. Of the respondents who completed these items, 84% ranked “allergies” as difficult to overcome in their work setting. Seventy-two percent identified “support from administration” as difficult to overcome, 68% ranked “legal issues” as difficult to overcome, 62% identified “care of animal,” 56% identified “cost,” and 55% identified “support from staff” as difficult to overcome in their work setting (Table 8).

Table 8
Counselor Difficulty Rating of AAI Challenges



Counselors were asked to rate potential challenges on a scale of “Extremely Easy to Overcome” to “Extremely Difficult to Overcome.” Allergies received the highest number of “difficult to overcome” ratings among respondents.

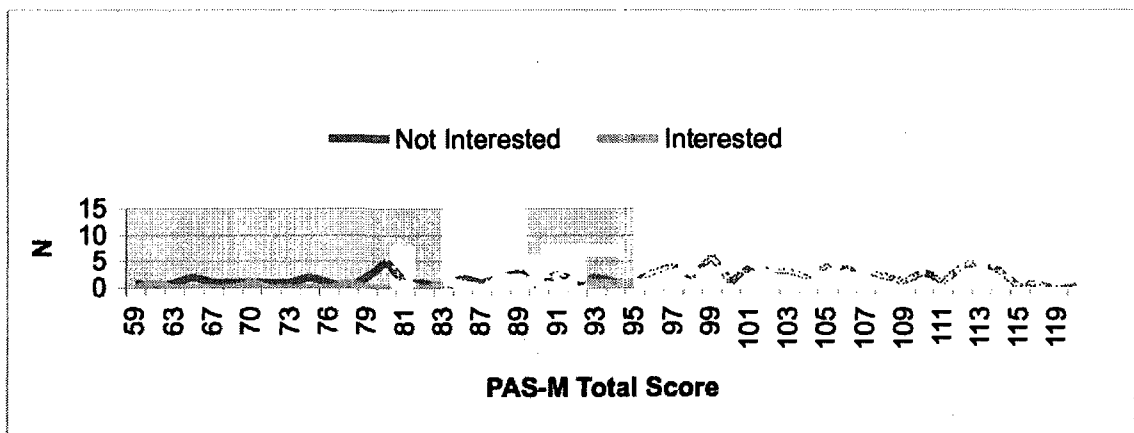
Several (N = 37) participants identified additional challenges including: School board approval, appropriate match between animal needs and the environment, community approval, fear of animals, smell, space, parental support, and fear the animal would be an unwelcomed distraction (Appendix E).

Attitude toward Animals

Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in utilizing AAI? This researcher hypothesized that counselors interested in using AAI would have more positive attitudes towards animals than counselors not interested in AAI. Survey data support this hypothesis. Because the dependent variable was ordinal and highly negatively skewed and the variances were unequal, Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare AAI interest and PAS-M scores. The 123 participants using and interested in using AAI have significantly higher mean ranks (130.33) than the 97 participants not interested in using AAI (85.36), $U = 3527$, $p = >.001$, $r = -.35$ which is considered a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). In general, PAS-M scores were higher for participants interested in using AAI than for participants not interested in using AAI (Table 9).

Table 9

PAS-M Score by Interest I AAI



Respondents interested in using AAI scored higher on PAS-M than respondents not interested in using AAI.

There was no significant difference among mean PAS-M scores of respondents in elementary, middle, or high school settings (102, 101, and 101, respectively). The mean PAS-M score of respondents interested in utilizing AAI was 105 while the mean PAS-M score of respondents not interested in utilizing AAI was 96. As predicted, higher PAS-M scores were associated with an interest in utilizing AAI.

Anecdotal Data

The online survey invited participants to contact the researcher with questions or comments. Several participants took advantage of this invitation and the following anecdotal data were gathered:

One respondent said he was not a huge animal lover, but he had used his dogs in therapeutic settings and was amazed by the way his clients responded. He was interested in pursuing doctoral research in the field of AAI.

One middle school counselor had been using AAI in her practice for four years. She had given a presentation to the superintendent about the benefits of AAI. When she was denied the first time, she went back and gathered more research and gained the support of an additional counselor in the district. Her second attempt resulted in approval for AAI to be used throughout the district, with stipulations including training and certification for the animals, additional insurance, permission slips, and an understanding that the animals will mainly stay in the counselor's office.

Conclusions

Conclusions are reported according to research questions and hypotheses.

How much do school counselors know about AAI? This researcher hypothesized that few counselors would consider themselves knowledgeable regarding the use of AAI. Survey data do not support this hypothesis. Most respondents (73%) consider themselves knowledgeable in regards to the therapeutic use of animals

Are school counselors interested in using AAI? This researcher hypothesized that at least half of respondents would be interested in using AAI. Survey data support this hypothesis. More than half of respondents use or are interested in using AAI (56%).

What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling? This researcher hypothesized the most salient benefit would be an improvement in social skills and the most salient challenge would be support from administration. Survey data do not support these hypotheses. Respondents most frequently identified “decrease in stress and anxiety” as a useful beneficial (86%) and “allergies” as most difficult to overcome in their work environment (84%).

Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in utilizing AAI? This researcher hypothesized that counselors who are interested in using AAI will have a more positive attitude towards animals. Survey

data support this hypothesis. Respondents using or interested in using AAI scored higher on the PAS-M than respondents not interested in using AAI.

The following chapter provides a discussion of results and implications for practice.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Introduction

There is much evidence to support the use of AAI in institutional settings, but little has been written about AAI in the institution of schools and specifically in school counseling practice. The purpose of this study was to assess school counselor attitudes toward and interest in the incorporation of AAI into school counseling practice.

This researcher gathered data by distributing an online survey to public school counselors in New Hampshire. The following research questions were addressed:

- How much do school counselors know about AAI?
- Are school counselors interested in using AAI?
- What do school counselors perceive to be the most salient benefits and challenges of implementing AAI in school counseling?
- Is there a relationship between positive attitudes towards animals and an interest in using AAI?

This study found most counselors consider themselves knowledgeable regarding AAI and more than half are using or are interested in using AAI. A reduction in stress and anxiety was most frequently identified as a benefit of AAI while allergies were most frequently identified as a difficult challenge to

overcome. Respondents using or interested in using AAI also had more positive attitudes towards animals.

Interpretation

Most counselors considered themselves knowledgeable regarding the therapeutic use of animals. There is a wealth of anecdotal data about AAI (Nebbe, 1991; Wells, 2004; King, 1998; Fine, 2006). These data are published in professional journals (*Anthrozoos*, *Society and Animals*, and *Child and Youth Care Forum*), textbooks (e.g., Fine, 2006), books (King, 1998; Wells, 2004), and web sites (Delta Society, 2008). Perhaps AAI has reached a point of familiarity in our society because it is discussed in so many forms. In addition, it may be the case that all who have experienced connections with animals feel they have an intuitive knowledge of the therapeutic value of AAI.

Most school counselors see AAI as a useful therapeutic tool (92%) and more than half of respondents use or are interested in using AAI (56%). The discrepancy between value of AAI and interest in using AAI may be explained best by open response survey items where some counselors commented on how little “therapeutic” work actually happens in school counseling. They are short on time and resources to fulfill their duties. For counselors in this position, AAI may not be very useful in their work. If most of the counselor’s time is spent in activities other than therapeutic interactions with students, an animal may be a large hassle with little benefit.

For counselors interested in using AAI, they may benefit from knowing they are not alone. It may be helpful for them to see how many other counselors

are interested in incorporating this technique into their practice. As one counselor reported anecdotally, she found allies and that helped her to be successful in gaining administrative approval to incorporate AAI into her practice as a school counselor.

A reduction in stress and anxiety was most frequently identified as a useful benefit of AAI in school counseling. This may be a reflection of the types of challenges students face in school these days. Perhaps more counselors are seeing stressed and anxious students than students struggling with things like social skills. This would not be surprising given the pace expected from students these days. This researcher anecdotally observes that high school students are engaged in multiple extracurricular activities while trying to maintain high academic achievement. These standards may be perceived as excessively high and may lead to a population of stressed and anxious youth.

Allergies were most frequently identified as a difficult challenge to overcome in terms of implementing AAI in school counseling. Allergies may be perceived this way because they are a physical condition over which people have little influence. There are many people in our society who do not own pets because of allergies, however, it is worth noting that there are many hypoallergenic animals that could be used in AAI such as fish and some types of dogs and cats.

An interest in AAI was associated with a more positive attitude towards animals. As stated earlier, it may be the case that people who have experience with animals have an intuitive understanding of the therapeutic power of the

human-animal bond. It also may be the case that people with more positive attitudes towards animals feel less challenged by the difficulties of AAI implementation because they are more familiar with the process of caring for an animal.

Limitations

This study is limited in that the sample population represents a fraction of public school counselors in a small, rather homogeneous state. Results may vary with greater racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity. It would be interesting to see how cultural values influence the perceived benefits of AAI.

Self-selection may also have resulted in sample bias. This may have resulted in a sample population of counselors with strong feelings about AAI rather than a diverse population of counselors with varying degrees of feelings about AAI.

The use of technology to gather data may have excluded participation from counselors in school districts without internet access. It also may have caused counselors lacking in computer competency skills to be excluded from participation.

Implications and Recommendations for Action

The online survey was viewed by hundreds of public school counselors. Some felt inspired by the topic and contacted the researcher for further information. Others expressed disapproval of incorporating animals into school counseling. Regardless of the opinions, the survey inspired a dialogue and brought attention to the topic. As one respondent said, "maybe it will help more

school counselors and other therapists move forward with some pet therapy of their own!" (A. Malette, personal communication, March 30, 2009).

Counselors interested in using AAI may benefit from the knowledge that there are many others who share their interest. They may also benefit from knowledge generated regarding usefulness and challenges of AAI. If they know that allergies are most frequently identified as challenging to overcome, they can create an implementation plan to address that challenge.

It is recommended that counselors interested in using AAI combine knowledge gathered from this research with implementation resources such as the one available from The Delta Society (2008).

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research may include alternative educational settings. Are there differences between public and private school counselor's perceptions of AAI? How about boarding schools versus day programs?

Another avenue of exploration relates to the role of the school counselor. To what extent do counselors interact with students in a therapeutic context? How does the level of therapeutic interaction differ among elementary, middle, and high schools? It would be interesting to replicate this study with other school personnel such as school social workers, school psychologists, student assistance counselors, and addictions counselors.

Conclusion

Some school counselors reported therapeutic counseling was not a part of their job. They don't have time for it and greater value is placed on other

outcomes expected from them. Perhaps the incorporation of animals into school counseling would make space for much needed therapeutic elements: a feeling of connection, recognition, and nonjudgmental support from another living creature.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Online surveys were sent using SurveyMonkey. Screen shots of the entire survey are included below, beginning with the introductory email:

To: [Email]
From: scy33@unh.edu
Subject: Animals and School Counseling - Request for Participation in Brief Survey
Dear New Hampshire School Counselor,

My name is Sara Morrow and I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of New Hampshire. The purpose of my research is to understand the perceived benefits and challenges of utilizing animal-assisted interventions in school counseling.

You are asked to participate in an online survey that I anticipate will take no more than ten minutes to complete. Your participation will involve answering survey questions that ask about your prior experience with animals and the benefits and challenges you anticipate in regards to incorporating animals into school counseling practices.

You may benefit from participation by gaining an awareness of a type of therapeutic intervention that you may potentially incorporate into your practice as a school counselor.

All information received will be confidential. Study results will be reported in the researcher's Master's thesis anonymously and in aggregate form.

Please click below to participate in the survey.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Sara Morrow

Researcher: Sara Morrow
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Faculty Advisor: David J. Hebert, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Education
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Animal-Assisted School Counseling

Dear Counselor,

My name is Sara Morrow and I am a Master of Arts in Counseling candidate with the Department of Education at the University of New Hampshire. The purpose of my research is to understand the perceived benefits and challenges of utilizing animal-assisted interventions in school counseling.

Animal-assisted intervention is defined as "any therapeutic intervention that intentionally includes or incorporates animals as part of the therapeutic process or milieu." (Kreuger, Trachtenberg, & Serpell, 2004). Synonyms include: animal-assisted therapy, animal-assisted activities, pet therapy, pet psychotherapy, pet-facilitated therapy, pet-facilitated psychotherapy, four-footed therapy, animal-facilitated counseling, companion-animal therapy, and co-therapy with an animal (LaJoie, 2003, as cited in Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 22).

You are asked to participate in an online survey that I anticipate to require no more than ten minutes to complete. Your participation will involve answering survey questions that ask about your prior experience with animals and the benefits and challenges you anticipate in regards to incorporating animals into school counseling practices.

Your participation is beneficial in that you are gaining an awareness of a type of intervention that you may potentially incorporate into your therapeutic practice.

Study results will be reported in my Master's thesis anonymously and in aggregate form.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research, contact the researcher (Sara Morrow, scy33@unh.edu) or the University of New Hampshire Institutional Review Board (julie.simpson@unh.edu).

Click the "next" button to indicate consent to participation and begin the survey.

Animal-Assisted School Counseling

1. Gender

2. Age

3. I work with students in (choose all that apply)

- ☐ Elementary School (grades K-5)
- ☐ Middle School (grades 6-8)
- ☐ High School (grades 9-12)

4. I have one or more pets.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Attitude Toward Pets

This section pertains to your attitude toward pets.

Please answer each of the following questions as honestly as you can, in terms of how you feel right now. Don't worry about how you think others might answer these questions. There aren't any right or wrong answers. All that matters is that you express your true thoughts on the subject.

Please answer with one of the following seven options for each question:

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Moderately Disagree
- 3 - Slightly Disagree
- 4 - Unsure
- 5 - Slightly Agree
- 6 - Moderately Agree
- 7 - Strongly Agree

Attitude Toward Pets

5. I really like seeing pets enjoy their food.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------

Select one:

6. My pet means more to me than any of my friends (or would if I had one).

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------

Select one:

7. I would like to have a pet in my home.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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Select one:

8. Having pets is a waste of money.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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Select one:

9. House pets add happiness to my life (or would if I had one).

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------

Select one:

10. I feel that pets should always be kept outside.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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Select one:

Animal and Pet Attitudes

11. I spend time every day playing with my pet (or would if I had one).

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

12. I have occasionally communicated with my pet and understood what it was trying to express (or would if I had one).

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

13. The world would be a better place if people would stop spending so much time caring for their pets and started caring more for other human beings instead.

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

14. I like to feed animals out of my hand.

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

15. I love pets.

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

16. Animals belong in the wild or in zoos, but not in the home.

Strongly Disagree Moderately Disagree Slightly Disagree Unsure Slightly Agree Moderately Agree Strongly Agree

Select one:

Animals and Pets

17. If you keep pets in the house you can expect a lot of damage to furniture.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. I like house pets.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Pets are fun but it's not worth the trouble of owning one.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. I frequently talk to my pets (or would if I had one).

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. I hate animals.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. You should treat your house pets with as much respect as you would a human member of your family.

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Attitudes and Beliefs About Animals

This section pertains to your attitude toward the therapeutic use of animals in schools.

Please answer each of the following questions as honestly as you can, in terms of how you feel right now. Don't worry about how you think others might answer these questions. There aren't any right or wrong answers. All that matters is that you express your true thoughts on the subject.

Attitudes and Beliefs About Animals

23. Please choose the statement that best describes you.

- ☐ I use animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor.
- ☐ I am interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor.
- ☐ I am not interested in using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor.

Comments

24. I have not heard of animal-assisted interventions used as a therapeutic tool.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------

Select one:

25. I am knowledgeable about the therapeutic use of animals.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
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Select one:

26. Animal interaction is a valuable therapeutic tool.

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Unsure	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
----------------------	------------------------	----------------------	--------	-------------------	---------------------	-------------------

Select one:

27. Please rank these potential benefits of animal interaction in terms of their usefulness in your work as a school counselor.

	Extremely Useless	Moderately Useless	Slightly Useless	Unsure	Slightly Useful	Moderately Useful	Extremely Useful
Reduce Stress and Anxiety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve Social Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decrease Disruptive Behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve Student-Counselor Rapport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase Self-Esteem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve Staff Morale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other Potential Benefits (please specify)

28. Please rank these potential challenges of implementing animal-assisted interventions in terms of how difficult they would be to overcome in your work setting.

	Extremely Difficult	Moderately Difficult	Slightly Difficult	Unsure	Slightly Easy	Moderately Easy	Extremely Easy
Support from Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support from Staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allergies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Care of Animal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other Potential Challenges (please specify)

Animals and School Counseling

Thank you for completing the survey! This page will further explain the purpose of the research to which you have contributed. After you are finished viewing this page and have submitted your answers by clicking on the button at the bottom of the page, it is recommended you exit or quit your Web browser to eliminate the possibility that your responses could be viewed by hitting the "back" button.

Please do not discuss or show the information on this page to any of your colleagues who might complete the survey or speak with someone else who might. This is to avoid invalidating the results of the study. I would like to remind you that all the data you just provided will be kept in a confidential and anonymous manner and any identifying information you provided will be used only to provide follow-up information about animal-assisted interventions or results of this study.

Because you have invested time in this study, you may have an interest in what I hope to find from your results. The purpose of this study is to assess the current knowledge of and interest in the incorporation of animal-assisted interventions into school counseling. The main objectives are:

- To examine the relationship between prior experience with animals and attitudes regarding the use of animals in school counseling
- To assess counselor attitudes towards and knowledge of animal-assisted interventions
- To determine perceived benefits and challenges of animal-assisted interventions

If you have questions about this survey or would like a copy of the results (available May 2009) please email or call me at the number below. Thank you again for your interest and participation. Please select one of the following:

CLICK "DONE" at bottom of page if you have read this information and want to submit your responses to the survey.

CLICK "EXIT THIS SURVEY" at top of page if you have read this information and want to remove your responses from the data file.

Researcher: Sara Morrow
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Department of Education
Morrill Hall
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Work Cited

Kreuger, K. A., & Serpell, J. A. (2006). Animal-assisted interventions in mental health: Definitions and theoretical foundations. In A. Fine (Ed.), *Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice* (2nd ed., pp. 21-38). Boston, MA: Elsevier.

Kreuger, K. A., Trachtenberg, S. W., & Serpell, J. A. (2004). Can animals help humans heal? Animal-assisted interventions in adolescent mental health. Retrieved November 10, 2008, from University of Pennsylvania Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society Web site:
http://www2.vet.upenn.edu/research/centers/cias/pdf/CIAS_AAI_white_paper.pdf

APPENDIX B
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

University of New Hampshire

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

10-Dec-2008

Morrow, Sara
Education, Morrill Hall
219 Washington Street #2
Dover, NH 03820

IRB #: 4442

Study: Animal-Assisted Interventions and School Counseling

Approval Date: 05-Dec-2008


The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,


Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
Hebert, David

APPENDIX C

OPEN RESPONSES – AAI USE

Participants were asked to choose the statement that best described them: “I currently use AAI in my practice as a school counselor”, “I am interested in using AAI in my practice as a school counselor”, “I am not interested in using AAI in my practice as a school counselor”. Following that question, there was room for participants to comment. Those responses are shown below:

Due to allergies we are not allowed to have animals in our building.
I often think how nice it would be if we could have a therapy dog in our guidance department!
It's an unrealistic idea. School counseling is less "therapy" than you might think.
We now have some students with severe pet allergies so I'm unable to bring my dog to my school.
Would love to, but see barriers in terms of public acceptance and allergy/health issues (perceived or actual).
Not really sure how I feel about using animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, would need to learn more about it.
Many elementary counselors in our district are interested in therapy animals, but there are hurdles with district policies – allergies, safety, insurance, etc. We are discussing it, though!
Calypso, a “Paws for reading” golden, comes into our school 2 hours each week and students read to her. It's a wonderful experience!
But I would support the rights of others to do so.
But I would support the rights of others to do so.
Concerns re: safety, administrative and parental consent
I have always wanted to use animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, but there are so many allergies that it is not allowed in my district or my previous district.

APPENDIX C (continued)

It is my impression that animal interaction may be better placed at the elementary level. I read recently about a charter school that mandates a student be responsible for a pet, and while that form of therapy seems most appropriate with very at-risk youth in the high school level, it does not seem applicable to the general population in a public high school setting
...not sure where my district is on permitting a therapy dog in school, but I've heard the reasons why some counselors are turned down...need liability insurance-and-schools don't want to pay-and-too many kids with allergies to let animals into schools!
I have in the past but currently am not using animals.
There are so many children with allergies, pets are not allowed in the school setting. I would be interested in a private setting.
For the safety of all students animals are not allowed in public schools except as service animals.
I used my dog with a young woman a few years ago with some good success
School based counseling has tremendous challenges in that the counseling visits tend to last 20-30 minutes long. Also, frequently counseling visits get canceled for numerous reasons. (i.e. snow days, assemblies, specials, birthdays, holiday celebrations in the classroom etc.)
Equine therapy is of interest to me.
I am not sure how we could incorporate that in a high school, large school setting
Requires support of administration....allergies are an issue.
Yes... though there are people who are truly allergic. I'm finding the disagree/agree model awkward with many of these questions.
I have a trained golden retriever that is certified through Therapy Dog International, Inc. that currently comes once a month to work at my school with students
however, getting that to happen could be a problem-----
I have incorporated 2 fake fish who swim in a small bowl via battery power. they look like Dorrie and Nemo. The kids LOVE them and interact with them! I would consider a live animal.
Unfortunately we are unable to have animals in our school due to allergies.
however our school wouldn't allow pets on campus
I think animal interaction is beneficial but my current position does not hold any opportunities for animal based counseling.
School reg restrict animals in school unless a service animal
I would need to know more about how it is used in the school environment - I certainly know of the benefits, but can't imagine having an animal with me all day along with 1200 kids!

APPENDIX C (continued)

It depends upon the feasibility and the specific students. In my former position in an elementary school, the school nurse (now retired) was adamantly against any animals being in the school because of potential allergies.
The logistics is the downside
I use a lot of puppets. The puppets are often animals and the children love that. They especially love, "Fluffy the Friendly Feeling Dog" which is a white dog puppet with long arms that can give hugs.
I currently have a fish in my office and have had a hamster. We have looked into having a dog at school (cannot due to allergies) and I would be interested in other animals.
We are not given enough time during the school day to meet with kids, never mind with pet interactions. We are short handed with professional staff as it is.
would be concerned about time restraints and liability
I understand the benefits of animals on the human condition but under the current model for schools I do not see where animals would fit in a counseling arena. That being said, I would love to see a reawakening of the benefits of the outdoors, including farm related practices that include animal related chores and upkeep. I am opposed to the use of animals for the benefit of humans without consideration for the best interest of the animal, and the ecosystem as a whole, however.
It's not practical in school setting..also, since nearly everything in schools is driven by liability especially student safety and allergy related, I can't imagine schools allowing pets in the building. Our school banned dogs, cats, and even visits from SPCA animals recently for these reasons. I don't agree with this policy, but this is what the school board decided.
I think animals would be a wonderful tool but are not practical for a public school and such a large caseload of students
I would like to learn more about this - I have reservations about the true benefit of using animals in a school setting as meetings with students are often brief (15 - 25 minutes) and often take place outside of the office. I also see 5th graders and I think that they would be distracted/excited by the animal and may not be able to focus on the issue at hand. I am all for the therapeutic use of animals but I have had difficulties doing therapeutic counseling in a school setting. It is very difficult for a student successfully transition to the classroom after an emotional session.
Please let me know if you are researching how to propose this to schools. I am very interested and have trained one AAT dog in the past, so I would LOVE more information!!!
Never really thought about it until now.
Our district policy is to not allow animals (especially dogs) in our buildings (with the exception of special presentations) because of severe allergies that have emerged in the past.
not sure where district stands

APPENDIX C (continued)

I would if the school I work at encouraged animals but, they do not.
It depends upon the feasibility and the specific students. In my former position in an elementary school, the school nurse (now retired) was adamantly against any animals being in the school because of potential allergies.
The logistics is the downside
I use a lot of puppets. The puppets are often animals and the children love that. They especially love, "Fluffy the Friendly Feeling Dog" which is a white dog puppet with long arms that can give hugs.
I currently have a fish in my office and have had a hamster. We have looked into having a dog at school (cannot due to allergies) and I would be interested in other animals.
We are not given enough time during the school day to meet with kids, never mind with pet interactions. We are short handed with professional staff as it is.
would be concerned about time restraints and liability
I understand the benefits of animals on the human condition but under the current model for schools I do not see where animals would fit in a counseling arena. That being said, I would love to see a reawakening of the benefits of the outdoors, including farm related practices that include animal related chores and upkeep. I am opposed to the use of animals for the benefit of humans without consideration for the best interest of the animal, and the ecosystem as a whole, however.
It's not practical in school setting..also, since nearly everything in schools is driven by liability especially student safety and allergy related, I can't imagine schools allowing pets in the building. Our school banned dogs, cats, and even visits from SPCA animals recently for these reasons. I don't agree with this policy, but this is what the school board decided.
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Never really thought about it until now.
Our district policy is to not allow animals (especially dogs) in our buildings (with the exception of special presentations) because of severe allergies that have emerged in the past.
not sure where district stands

APPENDIX C (continued)

too many legal issues possible: what if an animal bites a student? Also...allergic reactions
I have used animal interaction in my practice as a school counselor, before my certified therapy dog (St. Bernard) passed away. My current dog, a Golden Retriever, is still growing up at almost 4 and isn't quite ready yet. I have a pony that will be doing therapy work, a goat that has been in schools and a cat that would be perfect as a therapy cat, she just hasn't done it yet.
My public school would probably not allow it, and most of my "counseling" these days is done within group settings of 20 students for classroom curriculum.
School has not agreed to it yet.
We have considered using animal therapy but have not implemented it.
I have two therapy dogs that come to school 1x/week. They, along with a therapy cat, also visit an area nursing home.
the challenge is allergies, transportation and cleanliness
It doesn't matter if I would want to their are policies set in almost every public school that prevent animals from being in schools due to allergies and safety
I have had 2 guinea pigs and the kids just loved them! We have a bird in the school now, hamsters and some fish in some of the classrooms. We also have Dog Tales on a regular basis (kids read to a trained dog to help the kids become more fluent with reading).
Just starting using dogs to work with students and they have had a dramatic positive affect.
I am also looking into dogs being reading buddies.
I will be retiring this school year
I think it would be very beneficial, but the liability is something I don't think could be overcome.
We have a dog in our school one day per week, although I do not directly use the dog as part of my practice. The students love the day when the dog is here!
We don't allow pets on school grounds (but we have had the Audubon visit with some creatures), but I still find the possibility interesting
I can see it used for mental health therapy, but I can not understand how it would benefit high school guidance counseling.
It would be pretty tough to have a dog in school due to allergies, etc.... it doesn't really make sense in this setting
Too much liability
Potential student allergic responses prohibit me from doing this

APPENDIX C (continued)

I work in a high school where College & Career Readiness are my priorities and it's hard work - look at the state of our national economy!
Many years ago I was able to bring my dog to school, however, because of allergies and possible law suits, (if someone were to be bitten) animals are no longer allowed in schools. I do, however, bring my dog to my private therapy practice, most clients express being calmer when he is with them in a session.
Interested but does not seem likely.
Animals are barred from my school due to potential allergic reactions, and liability.
I'd rather not deal with animal needs at school. There are too many other concerns and I could not guarantee adequate attention to the animal. Living things are important to the counseling process but plants (horticultural therapy) are a better idea for my situation anyway.
It is not likely that pets would be allowed in a public school building. If they were, I would love to bring them.
There are too many liability issues with bringing animals into the schools.
Our school has a rule against animals for reasons of allergies
Sometimes this is difficult, given allergies and school and district policies.
Although I personally love animals and know that they can have a very positive affect on students...I am unsure as to how they could be used in a public school setting due to liability issues...
This is impossible due to school policies.
I organized an Animal Rescue Club at my elementary school until it was decided that because of liability issues, the school should not allow animals in the building anymore.
Cannot use dogs as we have children in our school with allergies to hair which their MD communicated to us.
We are not allowed to have pets in our school due to some students with severe allergies.
This is my first year-I don't even know the attitude towards animals in my school and am just figuring out my lesson plans! Maybe down the road a couple of years-I see animals as a huge asset.
I am not sure I know where it would be applicable.
There are liability issues and policies disallowing student contact with pets I would consider useful in therapeutic practice such as cats or dogs.
Our School Psychologist has a therapy dog in school.

APPENDIX C (continued)

I only have apprehension about allergies, but think pet therapy is wonderful!!
I don't see this as a feasible choice in a busy school environment.
I would be interested in using animals as part of counseling and I think it can be beneficial; however, I don't believe it is feasible or very realistic in a school setting.
Pets are not allowed at our school for health and safety reasons.
I have used....not so much now.
It is not possible at our school since we have a "no animal at school" policy.
I have never sincerely considered using animals due to certain logistical considerations--could be useful with certain types of cases--have witnessed success with its use in nursing homes.
School rules have changed the availability of animals in schools. I have always enjoyed the use of animals with children.
We have a "reading therapy dog" that comes to our school but I have no interest in using pets myself.
I am interested but our school does not allow animals in the building!
Our Principal brings in his dog, (a yorkiepoo) and it has been great for both kids and staff. She has stayed in guidance a lot and when anyone is crying or having a rough day they hold and pet her. She is a rare dog- never barks and has non-allergic hair, so she feels like a teddy bear. She has been wonderful for this school. I think there would have to perhaps be some sort of approval process to bring in pets, I know my house pets couldn't handle it, they bark too much and don't stay put.
NA- I am a career counselor and my role is quite different than a school counselor.
I have brought my dog to school and introduced her to students informally but it is my understanding that doing so formally would be a great deal of red tape and hassle due to liability despite the fact that she is a very mild mannered dog.
working in a public school setting, pet are not allowed in the school due to allergies.
It might work in a small school setting if someone already has a strong relationship with a well trained pet. Among the problems are that some children are uneasy around dogs, some are not well trained, they do leave hair to which some are allergic and they do require care including scooping up poop. If a dog is unwell, or frightened, they could react in a way that would be a danger to children. There are sometimes dogs outside our building at the end of the day. They are sometimes in impediment to getting the children safely and efficiently to their buses and cars.
There are a lot of barriers to using certain animals in public school settings.
My greatest concern regarding the use of pets at school is that many students/staff are allergic to animals. This means many would be excluded from activities and some may have trouble being in the same school with pets.

APPENDIX D

OPEN RESPONSES - AAI BENEFITS

Participants were asked to rank the usefulness of six potential benefits of AAI. Following that item, space was provided for comments. Those comments are included below:

Improve empathy and caring for others, reduce anger
I don't question the potential benefits of animal assisted intervention. My "unsure" answers to #27 have to do with its use in a school counseling environment. Unfortunately, school counseling these days is heavy on administrative tasks and light on therapy.
self-confidence, caring, understanding emotions
...student responsibility feeding and taking dog out (with supervision) as needed...
All of these benefits would be great, but again, I think the allergy problem would present itself quickly between staff and kids.
student can develop responsibility if given opportunity to help care for animal
especially compassion and empathy building
Open up dialogue with quieter students who are not choosing to speak. Opportunity for a student to learn respect and caring for another being.
Again... finding these questions/responses awkward.
Animals, especially dogs, bring a calmness to an environment that would not normally be present.
having my pet at school allows for communications between students and myself who would otherwise not talk. I use the pet as a reward for some and also a topic of conversation.
I have seen the benefits in the mental health setting
Potentially attract oppositional and withdrawn students.
Brings comfort holding an animal when one is sad, upset or grieving.

APPENDIX D (continued)

To do this you must have time and recourses. As you will find out, both of these things are at a premium.
could enable a socially isolated child to have something to draw others to him/her
Educate students in the area of respect for animals
Pets in a school counselor's office can make it a more inviting and relaxed place for many students and staff.
It would make me feel great.
teach children to interact with animals respectfully, and how to appropriately care for them.
Increase test scores
Increase sense of responsibility and ability to care for an animal - to go outside of oneself.
working through trauma related events in ones life
responsibility; dependability; trust
These benefits would be possible if it was practical to have a dog in school
Animals are wonderful so are babies - and we don't have either in our high school. Any creature that's dependent on us makes us feel better about ourselves! - Does it help student grades over time?
Increase sense of responsibility and caring
I think someone likes animals (a lot) and wants to bring them into their workplace and is trying to back that desire up with data. Good luck. We bring kids who like animals to the humane society to job shadow and extend volunteer opportunities to them, which they generally do no follow up on. Most of our kids have animals, which they love, at home and at their friends homes.
Teaching responsibility and kindness
Help children and adults with loss and grieving.
At our Alternative School, the social worker there, on occasion would bring in her two dogs. Naturally, most of the students loved this. However, the administration, has since disallowed allowing pets into any of the school buildings.
This could promote students interacting together who would not otherwise interact with each other. I can see this a very valuable in my office with individuals or small groups.
At least one of out teachers has had negative experience with dogs and fears them.

APPENDIX D (continued)

If you can learn kindness and responsibility for an animal, you may translate those skills to people.
Work with kids with autism and emotional handicaps
responsibility, self control, motivation, enthusiasm and skill practice have also improved
I don't believe that a pet belongs in a large high school.
I do believe animal interaction can provide an external focus, both mental and emotional, which can be therapeutically useful in certain cases, and depending on how the counselor uses it. There is no question in my mind that kids often unload their deepest feelings to animals. They unguardedly communicate both verbally and non-verbally.
Care for others as well.
I answered these as if I were using animals at school.
I have seen dogs brought into our school with whom children read. It is at a time of day when the building is quiet and the children looked forward to the experience. I can see attaching something positive (spending time with a nice dog) with an activity the child may find difficult - a way to sort of desensitize children to learning to read if it has been a difficult process for them.

APPENDIX E

OPEN RESPONSES - AAI CHALLENGES

Participants were asked to rate the difficulty of overcoming six potential challenges of AAI in their work environment. Following that item, space was provided for comments. Those comments are included below:

Parental support and acceptance
I don't see it as appropriate in a high school setting because we do not provide therapy to our students, nor do we have the time to incorporate pets as much as I agree with pet therapies.
This would only create yet another distraction for students. It's difficult enough dealing with cell phones and ipods. Add animals to the mix, and students would forget why they're in school. Let's concentrate more on good parenting skills and getting students the clinical therapy they might need before having schools become even more responsible for their stress levels. Every year it seems the schools are taking on more and more of the parents roles. Keep the pets at home.
Many school districts live in fear of "liability" issues.
...ability to give all students opportunities to visit of work with therapy dog...
scheduling
Community reaction
I don't really see this working in the school environment, maybe if it were a small animal like a rabbit, gerbil, etc. A large animal would really excite the general school community and may frighten small children
We had a "therapeutic" dog here last year so I know it would be OK (with assistant principal). I personally would not want to be responsible for the animal however.
Fears from students/staff/parents
State Laws?
Space
Family and community? Proactive publicity would help.

APPENDIX E (continued)

Have the community understand and be knowledgeable about animal therapy. Not sure they would accept the idea.
Smell, support of community
my schedule of groups every 30 minutes every afternoon would make it unfeasible
Allergies and legal issues would be the biggest obstacles
The biggest concerns would be allergies and students/staff who are afraid of animals. The goal is to make the space inviting and soothing with the animal - not threatening. There would have to be an alternative setting or some other solution for students/staff who are afraid or allergic to animals.
school board approval...
School board dictates policy and is primarily concerned with liability issues in consultation with SAU attorney making it impossible to implement any animal presence in the school building or on the school grounds.
I would have concern for the security of the animal when I am out of my office. As much as I love the idea of using an animal therapeutically in my school I am having a really hard time understanding how to make this happen. I would love to have a therapy dog -
clear expectations about how the animal will be used in the setting...teachers would worry about it becoming too much of a distraction
Having the right animal to work with
Certain children may have a fear of certain animals based on a prior experience or parents' feelings about pets
animal training/certification; where would the pet come from if I did not have one
We have 50% of our student population on free and reduced lunch -supporting the physical needs of an animal in school would create extra costs.
Cost of program and management of program
I'd rather spend my time doing other things that I haven't time for now.
I can see the use of animals as more appropriate at the elementary school counseling level. At the high school level I could possibly see animals used with certain populations in a more contained environment than that of the chaotic world of high school guidance offices with 6 counselors and a steady stream of students, parents, college reps. etc.
Fear of animals, potential harm to the animal, potential harm to individuals (scratches, bites)
Toileting issues for the animal and either bringing it with me to classes (which would be a distraction from my teaching) when I teach whole classes. It would be easier to have an animal here for a short period of time rather than all day long.

APPENDIX E (continued)

With the current economy, cost would be a big concern as would the care and responsibility of the animal. Legal concerns have also been a prominent problem with our district and this would be of concern as well.

appropriate match between the animal needs and the environment

Potential parental objections (probably not likely here at my school though). Parental objection and potential legal risks appear to be the greatest obstacles in that administrations tend to be very sensitive to liability issues and potential criticism.

School board approval.

We don't really have any challenges because she has hair and not fur (so she does not affect allergies as other dogs do). Our principal is responsible for caring for her (which also takes care of the cost). Also, she is so small and sweet that it is VERY UNLIKELY that there will ever be any legal issues. Everyone loves her and it gives her a great place to be (with loving people) during the day.

Time needed to plan its use.

Who takes care of the animal/vet .bills, clean up, ,etc.?

A bit more info. here. I enjoyed pets as a child. We often had a dog or a cat. For a while we had a pony. When I was little I enjoyed playing with them and sometimes talked to them. I am at a stage in my own life when I do not want the responsibility of pets, the time and expense involved. My last pet damaged things in my home. I am getting my needs for companionship from friends and family and enjoy many other activities-singing, sports, etc. I also feel that in the US, people have gone overboard in the importance they place on animals. There are excessive amounts of money and resources devoted to pets. I am bothered by this, especially when I have seen people ignore their own health, physical and financial ,to provide for a pet. I see children who needs are not met as well as those of people's dogs. As you can detect from my response, you hit a nerve with this survey and I am venting my strong opinions that don't seem to be vented very often. On a positive note, I have also heard of elderly people who are visited by pets and it is reported to mean a lot to the residents. Pet therapy is just not, at this time, going to be something I am interested in. I am more interested in mentoring programs/foster grandparents, etc.