

May 2020

## Learning and Expertise of Equestrians: a Qualitative Assessment of Combining Humans and Equines in a Sport

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LEARNING AND EXPERTISE OF EQUESTRIANS  
A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF COMBINING HUMANS AND EQUINES IN A  
SPORT

by

Kiley Timler

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science  
in Anthropology

at

The University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee

May 2020

## ABSTRACT

### LEARNING AND EXPERTISE OF EQUESTRIANS A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF COMBINING HUMANS AND EQUINES IN A SPORT

by

Kiley Timler

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2020  
Under the Supervision of Professor Paul Brodwin

The following thesis focuses on the learning and expertise of equestrians. In this work I use two theories, the first Jean Lave's concept of apprenticeship or learning by doing. Apprenticeship allows people to gain the knowledge and skill they desire while also being able to become a part of a community. This knowledge and skill are seen as the newcomer becoming the oldcomer. The second theory uses Summerson Carr's ideas of expertise. She describes expertise through four processes, socialization, evaluation, institutionalization, and naturalization. Overall, she explains expertise as something people do rather than something they possess through performance. Performance allows individuals to not only physically demonstrate, but also talk about the subject at hand. Due to my fourteen years of riding experience, my research for this work took place over a six-month period at a horse farm in Wisconsin. It includes participant observation and ten interviews ranging from beginner to more advanced student riders, and the teaching staff. My overall ethnographic work questions if apprenticeships leads to expertise among equestrians. It is through this question and case study that I focus on the importance of embodied communication and partnership through the human-equine interspecies relationship.

I dedicate this thesis to three of my best friends and teachers Ed, Mac, and Peanut.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Equine Terms</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Beginner</i> .....	7
<i>Intermediate</i> .....	9
<i>Advanced</i> .....	11
<b>II. Literature Review</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<i>Situated Learning</i> .....	16
<i>Expertise</i> .....	19
<i>Situated Learning</i> .....	20
<i>Embodiment</i> .....	24
<b>III. Methods</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>IV. Data Analysis</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<i>Functionality</i> .....	43
<i>Lave and Learning</i> .....	49
<i>Reputation</i> .....	62
<i>Evolving Membership</i> .....	65
<i>Expertise</i> .....	67
<i>Expertise and Learning</i> .....	75

<b>V. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<i>Self-Reflection.....</i>	77
<i>Emic and Etic.....</i>	80
<i>Learning, Expertise, and Interspecies.....</i>	83
<b>VI. References.....</b>	<b>87</b>

## LIST OF EQUINE TERMS

**Bit:** a metal mouthpiece

**Breeches:** type of riding pants that extend to the ankles

**Canter:** a three-beat gait of a horse

**Clinician:** an outside instructor who works directly with a horse/ human pair

**Cross Country:** a course of obstacles ranging from jumps to water hazards, and ditching out of an arena

**Cross Rails:** two polls crossed in an x form

**Dressage:** part of a competition where horse and rider are expected to perform from memory a series of movements in an arena.

**Eventing:** competition consisting of three phases: dressage, stadium jumping, and cross country

**Faults:** penalty points at competition

**Fence:** another term for a jump

**Flat Ride:** a multitude of exercises from circles, turns, and transitions from pace to pace often in an arena.

**Gait:** the paces of a horse

**Girth:** a band attached to a saddle, used to secure it on a horse by fastening around its belly

**Groundwork:** exercises a rider does with their horse while on the ground.

**Half-chaps:** black wraps worn on a rider's lower leg to provide a level of support and protection

**Halt:** a stop

**Jump course:** a number of jumps with a specific pattern

**Lead:** the set of legs that advance forward to a greater extent

**Refusal:** failure of a horse to jump a fence

**Rein:** a long narrow strap attached to one end of the horse's bit, used to guide the horse while riding

**Spurs:** metal tool worn on the heels of riding boots, for the purpose of directing the horse

**Stadium Jumping:** often a course of multiple jumps in an arena

**Stirrups:** a metal frame that holds the rider's foot, it is also attached to the saddle

**Tacking Up:** preparing the horse for riding by placing on the proper equipment

**Trot:** one pace faster than a walk

**Whip:** a flexible tool such as a rod

**Withers:** the highest part of the horse's back, lying at the base of the neck above the shoulders



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my advisor, Paul Brodwin, whose underlying patience and counseling guided me through every step of this process. He has challenged me to unveil a strong knowledge base and skill sets I was slow to recognize at first. Further, I would like to acknowledge the other members of my committee, first Dr. Patrick Gray, who creative critiques allowed me to carefully examine the relevance of my work. Secondly Dr. Ingrid Jordt, who encouraged me to truly find my passion of study through this work.

I would like to give thanks to undergrad encourager and main editor on this thesis, Amanda Epping. In my last year of undergraduate, I was adrift on not only what I wanted to study, but also what I wanted to do after college. Therefore, she advised graduate school so I could truly find my desire of research in anthropology. Without her I do not know where I would be, therefore I am greatly thankful. I would like to thank Dr. Trudy Turner for not only helping me through the application process, but also believing in my finish.

Thank you to my family, specifically, Gary Chartier, my grandpa, who passed away while completing this work. I appreciate all the pushing and love during this process.

Above all, I would like to sincerely thank my participants, who permitted me to observe even the most sentimental moments in the background, invited me to activities and events, sat through interviews, and above all helped me feel the need and want to ride again. Thank you for being willing to share your stories and your lives with me. It has been an honor for which I will be eternally grateful.

## Introduction

I walk into the arena to find a long-legged girl riding a shiny, light brown horse. Her tall black boots accentuate her lean and tall appearance, while she lightly touches the boots to her horse's side to ask him to change his movement. She has the horse's head tucked by his shoulders, allowing for a small crinkle in his neck, while his back hoofs swing forward one after the other and step in the print the front hoofs left behind. The rider's body is long and rigid. Her elbows remain at her side with her shoulders back as her gloved hands remain an inch above the horse's withers and parallel to his body. I hear silence, but know the pair must have their own type of communication as they swiftly change gaits, directions, and whereabouts in the arena. I am not just seeing a girl ride her horse, but instead a dance among partners.

- My first participant observation of an advanced rider.

I recognize the rider above as advanced due to a few elements. First, it is her body positioning as she accentuates her long legs, her hands are right over the horse's withers<sup>1</sup>, and she has her shoulders back. This rider is also wearing proper clothing such as tall boots and gloves. Though I can see an advanced rider through these aspects, the most important is how she communicates with her horse. She and her horse change gaits and directions, but I am unable to hear any commands. Instead, they have their own communication, one I can see, but one I cannot hear. This rider did not attain this ability overnight but learned it through many years of practice. This thesis uses equestrians as a case study of learning and expertise.

I focus on the definitions of learning and expertise from two theories. The first is Jean Lave's ideas of learning through apprenticeship and situated learning. Lave defines apprenticeship as learning by doing, by slowly taking on more and more tasks to move from being a novice to more advanced. Among learning by doing individuals learn in a specific environment within a particular place, as situated learning. Situated learning states that every idea and action is generalized and adapted to the environment; it is the belief that people's roles in their community revolve around what they see and how they act. Lave observes this type of

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<sup>1</sup> The highest part of the horse's back, lying at the base of the neck above the shoulders

learning through Yucatec midwives, tailors, navy quartermasters, and meat cutters as each achieves a slow acquisition of knowledge to proceed from newcomers to old-timers, not just in skill, but also socially among the community. As the beginners move from peripheral to the center of the community, they become more active and engaged with the culture, and gain the role of the old-timer. My work will show how riders not only use apprenticeship to transition from a newcomer to an old timer, but also gain emotional knowledge with another species.

The second is Summerson Carr's "Enactments of Expertise." Carr focuses on the semiotics of expertise by concentrating on four processes. The first is socialization, second evaluation, third institutionalization, and fourth is naturalization. Socialization practices explain how people establish intimacy with classes of objects and how they learn to communicate their familiarity with this intimacy. It is in this section where Carr touches on the topic of Lave's apprenticeship but pushes past it to talk about evaluation. Authentication and evaluation are where individuals "make it their business to become intimate with classes of culturally valuable things that are relatively inaccessible or illegible to laypeople" (Carr 2010: 21). The third part, institutionalization, explains how ways of knowing are organized and authorized, such as through institutions with graduations, badges, and certificates. Carr argues, "what institutions do best is naturalize the expertise that has been produced in real-time interactions between putatively expert people and potentially valuable objects, allowing it to float across evermore empowering contexts" (25). The last is naturalization, which Carr explains as the enactment of bodies and knowledge. As individuals gain credentials and learn a specific language, they must be able to master these elements naturally or master the full performance of expertise. Overall, Carr focuses on what people do rather than what people possess. She shows this by explaining

that, expertise is not just about doing a physical activity such as drinking wine. Expertise also includes the discursive talk about physical activity, known as wine talk.

It is through the ideas of Carr's expertise and Lave's learning that I explore the learning and expertise of equestrians. I first examine if equestrians learn through apprenticeship and situated learning, and their definition of expertise. I will also dig into the human and equine relationship as it is crucial for learning and expertise among the sport. Lastly, I will look to discover if learning through apprenticeship for equestrians leads to expertise in their field. This is important to anthropology because the learning and expertise process focuses the evolution of communication from beginner to advanced riders, as the goal in equine sport is to form an embodied communication.

This work contains four main chapters: methods, literature review, data analysis, and conclusion. The methods chapter discusses the context of my data collection. The literature review examines the past and present work on multispecies studies, embodiment, learning, and expertise. The data analysis compares my data collection with Lave's work on learning and Carr's work on expertise. Lastly, the conclusion fully determines if Lave and Carr's theories apply to how equestrians learn and become experts.

The rest of the introduction explores the lessons of three riders. These riders are three different levels, beginner, intermediate, and advanced. I base the descriptions of these riders on real events and describe the scenes from my point of view as I sit and observe. This overview will not only introduce the three primary riding levels but will also detail how these individuals learn to ride a horse through lessons. It is essential to look for the differences in communication, verbal and non-verbal, and the instruction characteristics that each level needs. It is also crucial to look at the age levels and understand what each rider wears and how they act around the

horses. This section is an introduction to equestrians for those who do not have experience with the sport and descriptions further used in this work.

## **Beginner**

I sit on a white plastic chair blowing on my fingers as a small six-year-old named Tatum enters the arena with her parents. It is barely 9:30 am on a Saturday in December, and I am bundled in winter boots and a jacket while the rider is in only thin leggings, a long bright red jacket, and Kohl's kid tall fashion boots. I guess I forgot how much one's body temperature rises while riding instead of sitting and observing. Kelly, the instructor, notices their entrance and explains that the lesson horse Tatum will ride is out in the pasture. The mom quickly ushers the daughter out of the arena as the next lesson begins at 10 am and catching and tacking up<sup>2</sup> a horse beforehand takes some time. As ten rolls around, Tatum enters the arena and Kelly walks over to help her get on the horse, but notices the saddle they put on is too big for her and asks the dad to grab a smaller one. Tatum tries to put the smaller saddle on by herself while Kelly helps the other riders. Tatum's dad tries to point out the mistake, as the saddle is on backward, but Kelly responds, "let her figure it out for herself." Tatum slowly climbs two large wooden stairs to get on the horse, but notices she would be backward. Kelly then says "aha" and quickly switches the saddle for her and leads her out to start riding in a large circle with the rest of the girls. Sand covers the ground while posters, mirrors, riding tools such as bits<sup>3</sup>, whips<sup>4</sup>, and spurs<sup>5</sup> cover the walls. Much of the arena is bare except for the small white jumps lining the sitting area, individuals riding their horses, and the cones outlining a large circle where Kelly instructs the girls to ride.

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<sup>2</sup> Prepping the horse for riding by brushing and placing on the proper equipment

<sup>3</sup> A metal mouthpiece

<sup>4</sup> Flexible tool such as a rod

<sup>5</sup> Metal tool worn on the heels of riding boots, to direct the horse

Kelly begins the lesson by saying, “ok, everyone walk a minute as we are going to think about our body parts. Is the stirrup<sup>6</sup> on the ball of your foot? Are your heels way down? Yes? Then let us have a trot<sup>7</sup>.” Tatum’s tall brown boots barely reach the horse’s body as she uses both legs to kick the horse up to a trot. Instead of sitting tall with her legs extended, Tatum’s shoulders shrivel forward while her butt bounces in and out of the saddle. Her horse also tries to take advantage of her as he shoots to the inside of the cone at the last minute. The expectation is to steer around the cone on the outside. Kelly expects riders to do a circle around the cone for every miss or cut to the inside. The goal is to learn how to steer one’s horse and make their horse use the corners. Tatum huffs and says, “come on” as the circling becomes more and more frequent. The missing cones could be due to her long reins, which Kelly keeps telling her to shorten. After many reminders, Kelly tells Tatum to walk and helps her tie a knot in the left and right rein. Reins connect the rider’s hands to the horse’s head, specifically the bit in a horse’s mouth. It is an important part of communication between the two, as many beginners cannot communicate with their bodies and need to use the reins. Kelly then grabs Tatum’s hands and places them in front of the knots, closer to the horse’s mouth, while explaining this will stop the reins from slipping through her fingers.

Kelly continues to instruct the other girls as Tatum focuses on her short reins, finding her balance and body organization while trotting around the cones on the outside. As she misses fewer of the cones, Kelly keeps her on her toes by asking her to circle or drop her stirrups. These are small requests, but enough of a challenge for a six-year-old just learning how to ride. While Tatum is slowly making progress with controlling her horse, she also has to pay attention to the other horses in the lesson. As Pride, Tatum’s horse, inches closer to another horse’s butt, she

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<sup>6</sup> A metal frame that holds the rider’s foot, it is also attached to the saddle

<sup>7</sup> One pace faster than a walk

pulls her right rein to make him turn away. “Good thinking Tatum, even if your circle was the size of a peanut.” Kelly rarely replies with “wow that was perfect,” or “you need not practice anymore.” She complements the good and encourages practice on the substandard.

As the lesson nears a close, Kelly introduces an emergency dismount. She tells the riders they are going to lean forward, drop their stirrups, and throw their right leg over the horse to hop off while the horse is walking. Riders only dismount in this manner in an emergency or if a judge at a show asks for it. Tatum leans forward, drops her stirrups, throws her right leg over, and lands with her butt in the sand. She pops right back up, wipes off her butt, and stands next to her horse that stopped moving right as she fell. Once everyone else is off, Kelly helps Tatum roll up her stirrups and asks, “what side of the horse do we lead on?” Another girl responds, “on the left,” and Kelly leads the lesson down to the barn to help take-off the equipment and put the horses back in their pasture.

### **Intermediate**

A familiar black horse with a white stripe down the front of his face, named Thomas, enters the sand arena. I used to compete against this horse and its owner, who now lives and instructs in Florida, is one of Kelly’s (the head instructor’s) daughters. The girl leading him in is wearing turquoise breeches<sup>8</sup>, black half chaps<sup>9</sup> covering her short black boots, a basketball track jacket, gloves, and a shiny black helmet. She walks next Thomas as they do a lap around the ring then directs him to the mounting block or large wooden stairs. She then tightens the girth<sup>10</sup>, hops on, and walks around until Kelly finishes with her other lesson. Kelly begins the lesson by saying, “all right, TomTom; you look timber, did you get him off your inside leg, Kailyn?”

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<sup>8</sup> Type of riding pants that extend to the ankles

<sup>9</sup> Black wraps worn on a rider’s leg to provide a level of support and protection

<sup>10</sup> A band attached to a saddle, used to secure it on a horse by fastening it around its belly

Kailyn looks a little confused, but responds with a yes, though I suspect that she is unsure because of the lack of warm-up. Kelly then proceeds with the start of the lesson, “to a halt<sup>11</sup>, tummy, butt, thigh. Walk and stay tall with your shoulders. Tickle him tickle him. Look at the mirror next to you and get his head where it needs to be.” I see Kailyn lightly grabbing, and giving at the reins, as tickle, is another word to tell Kailyn to get the horse’s head in the correct position.

“Ok we are going to have a trot, make sure you send him up with your lower back and butt. Tickle him, tickle him. He is sticking his head out like a pro. To a walk. Yep, I could tell he was going to pull on your hand when you downshifted. This is a different horse than the lesson ponies; therefore, you need to make him do his job.” Kailyn seems a little flustered but keeps quiet as Kelly insists Kailyn performs tasks again and again. Once she keeps Thomas’s nose where it should be and physically connects with the horse with her butt, seat, and thigh, creating a smooth transition from one gait to another, she can walk and have a break.

The lesson moves on from flatwork<sup>12</sup> to jumping. “Alright gather him back up; we are going to play with some cross rails<sup>13</sup>.” Kelly gets up from her chair and has the pair trot over a few jumps and then go up to a canter.<sup>14</sup> “Slow down and do it again at the canter.” Kelly then makes the jumps higher as Kailyn huffs and puffs at a walk around the arena. Kailyn’s dad mentions, “you would think this girl does no physical activity, but she is in many different sports.” Kelly responds by saying she has had many different athletes try and take lessons, but everyone ends up out of breath and/or sore. She explains this sport requires not only the use of muscles that other sports do not use, but it also requires a different type of breathing that no one

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<sup>11</sup> A stop

<sup>12</sup> A multitude of exercises from circles, turns, and transitions from pace to pace, often in an arena

<sup>13</sup> Two polls crossed in an x form

<sup>14</sup> A three-beat gait



can describe until you just do it one day. Kelly finishes the lesson by challenging Kailyn to different jump courses<sup>15</sup> and making sure she asks Thomas to land on the correct lead<sup>16</sup>. Kailyn does not complete every course correctly, so she goes back through some again and sometimes a third time. Besides the huffing and puffing at the walk, Kailyn is a quiet rider. I can barely tell she has asked the horse to change direction or gait until they complete it as she talks to Thomas with her body instead of with her mouth. Kailyn listens to the criticism of Kelly saying, “stay and wait, stay and wait, hip, hip, hip, flex him now, flex him,” and uses it to help her make the corrections to the task at hand. Once Kelly accepts the last round as ok or acceptable, she tells Kailyn her lesson is complete for today. Kailyn stays on Thomas’s back as she walks him around to cool him down, but also dismounts and walks next to him as they take a lap before exiting the arena.

### **Advanced**

I walk up a black mat to the arena and find a girl on a shiny chestnut-colored horse named Major warming up on different dressage movements. The rider’s tall black boots fall to the edge of the horse’s stomach. She also has spurs attached to her ankles that lightly jab the side of the horse when she is communicating something to him. She has her t-shirt tucked into her breeches with a belt, and her hair pulled back into a neat bun with a hairnet. Her gloved hands are side by side, directly above the horse’s withers as if she is holding her horse’s tucked head. The communication between rider and horse is silent, but the pair smoothly change movements and gaits, almost as if they are one.

Kelly enters just as the connection between the horse and rider breaks. The horse stops listening as intently to the rider as he switches his attention to a loud noise in the corner of the

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<sup>15</sup> A number of jumps with a specific pattern

<sup>16</sup> The set of legs that advance forward to a greater extent

arena. Kelly tells Claire, the rider, not to worry too much about it as they are going outside to jump, anyway. The outside flatwork goes similarly to the warm-up before the banging noise, very smooth, organized, and quiet. Kelly makes minimal comments, restricted to small reminders such as, “make sure have bounce going into the canter.” The lesson progresses to jumping small jumps. Kelly notices Claire’s horse pulling her forward and going much faster over the jumps than he should, forcing Claire to have a difficult time slowing him down. Kelly tries different exercises such as stopping before, after, and in-between jumps, but Claire’s horse is still pulling her forward. Kelly then decides to change the horse’s bit and explains that the difference in shape is harsher and sits differently in the horse’s mouth. The lesson proceeds as Claire gets back to small jumps, “tell him to trot, trot, trot, in a rhythm and halt him with your spurs. Now I want you to stop before the fence<sup>17</sup> and then let him go over it.” When Claire does not halt, Kelly responds with yelling, “WAS THAT A HALT?” Claire scrunches her face in confusion to which her mom steps in to re-explain the task as another client pulls Kelly away for a moment.

When Kelly returns, Claire pulls the horse to a halt before the jump. After a few rounds of this, the horse stops pulling Claire through the fence and gently leaps over it with control. Kelly then has Claire move up to a canter and jump a small course. The pair look much more in control and collected as Kelly explains, “I am not sure if the bit is the answer, but it is something to play with.” As the horse and rider come around to a green and white gait, Major is unsure of where he should take off for the jump. Therefore, he gets his hoof stuck and stumbles over the jump. Major shakes Claire out of the saddle, and she ends up laying flat on her back in the sand while her horse gets up and limps around the arena. Kelly grabs the horse and asks if Claire is ok. She is slow to get up and will most likely be sore the next day, but she is ok. Kelly also

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<sup>17</sup> Another term for jump

checks the horse for any cuts or warmness to the limping leg but also finds nothing. Even though horse and rider seem to be alright, Kelly tells them the lesson is complete for the day as it was a significant fall, “but darn as we were making much progress.”

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The first section describes a beginner rider during one of her first lessons with the instructor, Kelly. Not only is she new, but she is also very young, creating a much more difficult task of gaining muscle and balance once on a horse. Since Tatum is new, Kelly pays very close attention to her, tells her repetitively what she should do, and notices how her movements affect other individual’s ability to ride. Beginners, like Tatum, start out taking lessons once a week with a few other riders. Kelly’s expectation about their knowledge of riding and all the aspects involved is low. Beginners’ first task involves learning how to get their horses ready in order to ride. Kelly decides on who walks them through this. In Tatum’s case, Kelly expects another rider or worker at the farm to help with the getting ready process as Kelly teaches another lesson up until Tatum’s lesson time. This process changes depending on the rider(s) and or the instructor’s schedule.

Beginners often do not have their own horse, so Kelly provides them with a few of her own. This group of horses has the title of lesson horses, which are generally older and gentle. Many of the older, more advanced riders see these creatures as teachers as these horses take care of the beginner riders while giving them small challenges. Tatum’s challenge includes keeping the horse moving at a specific pace while also steering it to the outside of the cones. This may seem simple as Kelly gives the analogy: riding is just like riding a bike, one has to steer, pedal or kick to keep the horse moving, and know when to break or pull back on the reins. The difference is this “bike” has a mind of its own and does not always agree with these tasks.

More advanced riders can distinguish Tatum's beginner rider status through a few aspects such as clothing, riding ability, and age. Tatum, being a six-year-old, is tiny, and the horse she is riding can barely feel a body on his back. She also has very little muscle to clinch on to the horse; therefore, she bounces and flies back and forth from one side of the horse to the other as he picks up speed. Her hair flies around her face, and a borrowed helmet sits to the side of her head. The boots she wears are similar to what I used to wear, as Kelly tells the beginners to wear toe-covering shoes with a heel, if possible.

The second section describes an intermediate rider's lesson. Kailyn takes both group and private lessons. Kailyn is older and more experienced than Tatum due to having more years of riding experience. As an intermediate rider, Kelly expects her to know how to get the horse ready and warmed up before the lesson. Some intermediates own or lease their own horses, but as Kailyn does not, so Kelly presents her with the challenge of riding Thomas. Thomas has similarities to the other lesson horses, such as being older and pretty gentle, but he has also competed at very high levels. Due to competing at high levels, Thomas has a high level of skill that not every rider can master. Not only does Thomas demand specific skills, but he is also Kelly's daughter's first horse. First horse means she bought, worked, and created a bond with him from a very young age in order to compete at high levels. Though he requires much skill in order to ride, Thomas also has a sentimental significance that Kelly takes seriously when selecting riders.

The excerpt above is Kailyn's first time riding Thomas. She did not have an easy adjustment as Kelly nagged her on the expectations of where Thomas's head should be, how fast he should go, and how Kailyn should use her body throughout the lesson. It is easy for Kelly to have these expectations, as she knows what Thomas can do and how he does it. Kailyn's dad

mentions her heavy breathing, among other comments during the lesson. Kailyn is not out of shape, but she is just not bonded enough with Thomas to be in a flow with him. In a quick interview, she explained she started adjusting to Thomas after the first lesson. “Yea, the first time riding Thomas, I mean we were not friends because I did not know how to ride him a certain way, but the switch turned on at my second lesson, and we began to bond. I think spoiling him with treats helped too.” It took some time to adjust and ride Thomas a certain way, but learning how to ride a more demanding horse is part of being an intermediate rider.

Kailyn and Tatum’s challenges are very different. Kailyn has to worry about not only going in a large circle but also about jumping. Jumping makes Kailyn think about a pattern and planning how she and Thomas will get from jump a to jump b. Beyond the logistics of riding, Kailyn presents herself differently than a beginner does. She wears breeches, boots, and gloves, so her hands do not rub against the reins. She also wears half chaps, so her calves do not rub against the saddle. She walks Thomas around when she first gets in the arena and before she leaves rather than having Kelly give her step by step instructions. Overall, Kailyn displays her riding level through the combination of body composition, years of riding, and learning ability to ride Thomas.

The last rider and horse combination is an example of an advanced rider. Claire is older than Kailyn and owns her horse, Major. The two compete with other advanced members in eventing, which comprises dressage, cross-country, and stadium jumping. As an advanced rider, Claire completes getting the horse ready and warm-up activities by herself. When Kelly enters the arena, she expects Major to be ready for anything she throws at the pair. Even though Major has a panic moment over a loud noise, Claire is right there to tell him to stop and to focus. As the lesson moves outdoors, Kelly barely has anything to say during the warm-up. This generally

means she does not see much that needs adjusting. As Claire and Major start jumping courses, Kelly notices Major pulling Claire over the fence instead of calmly jumping over. She has Claire halt Major before and after the jumps to calm him down, but he is still pulling on Claire. Since this exercise is not working, Kelly decides to try a different tool by changing the bit in the horse's mouth. The correct bit is vital for the horse and rider. Even though Claire communicates with Major through her thighs, legs, and seat, her hands hold the reins that connect to the bit. A bit is a rider's primary form of control, as it sits in a sensitive part of the horse's body, the mouth. Learning how to use a bit properly is essential because if used in the wrong way, it may hurt the horse.

However, this connection of control leads to safety as a horse is 1,000 lbs and can easily hurt himself and or his rider. Since Major is not respecting the first bit and flying over jumps, Kelly switches to a new one in order to allow more safety by giving Claire more control. Kelly generally decides on a rider's level and what they and their horse can handle. Here she believes Claire has the experience to learn and handle a new tool with her horse. She does not give Claire the bit as a fix but instead wants her to practice with it in order to jump courses safely. The rest of the lesson comprises exercises and routines that help both Claire and Major adjust to the new tool, but the progress stops short as the pair both fall over a fence. This is not due to the new tool, but merely a mistake that can happen at any time. When a rider falls off, Kelly usually makes them get back on and ride for a bit afterward, so the memory of the fall is not their last riding moment. Claire and Major's fall is a different case as both human and horse fell, and injury is a possibility. Kelly also knows Claire and has faith as an advanced rider that she can put it behind her and keep moving forward.

Like Kailyn, Claire not only displays her level of advancement through her riding skill but also with her clothes and presence. Claire has a very poised look as she wears her shiny tall black boots, has her shirt tucked into her breeches, wears gloves, and has her hair tucked in a bun with a hairnet. The saddle she is riding in is almost as shiny as her horse's coat, and the bit in the horse's mouth is clean rather than green from slobber. Through this, it is clear that Claire takes care of the expensive equipment involved in the sport along with her horse. The other rider's (beginner and intermediate) horses are clean and well taken care of, but the shine of their saddle and boots do not stand out to me as Claire's do. Claire is also quiet when communicating with her horse and Kelly. Other than yelling at Major for shying away from a large noise, Claire barely talks. She does not argue when Kelly gives her a task, and she communicates to her horse using her body instead of her voice. Tatum can do this the least as a beginner while Kailyn can do it some, but is still learning how to do it with the new horse she is riding. Claire knows her horse the best out of the three lessons. Even with the fall, the lesson allowed her to work through elements and earn real progress.

I have introduced three categories of riders above; beginner, intermediate, and advanced, and the rest of this work will explore all three. I break them into a general standard of organization from my participant observation and talking with the head instructor. The general standard of beginners is green or new individuals to the sport of riding. They are often a younger age, do not own any equipment, and use one of the instructor's horses like Tatum. As they are new, they need much help and have difficulty with even the simplest of tasks such as steering the horse. Intermediates are older and may have a broader age range. They may lease, own, or ride one of the instructor's more difficult horses, and have some equipment such as boots, helmets, and gloves. They may also have some brushes, a saddle, and a bridle if they own or lease a horse.

Intermediates do not need as much help with specific tasks such as getting the horse ready, but instructors challenge them with new tasks such as jumping.

Along with advanced riders, many intermediates may compete even with a horse that is not their own. Advanced riders also have the same age range as intermediates, but even more equipment such as a trailer. These individuals take care of all the warm-up activities, tack-up their horses on their own, and ride even when they do not have a lesson with the instructor. This group also knows their equine partner well as instructors push them to learn new tasks quickly and efficiently.

I also show how riders learn through lessons in the three different stages. Though I do not focus on the head instructor in this section, she is essential in the learning process. These riders see her as the expert, or the middle woman, between them and their horse. She helps them learn how to ride and how to communicate with another species. The rest of this work will focus on learning and expertise through the relationships of both horse and instructor.



## **Literature Review**

This chapter investigates past research concerned with equestrians by looking at four main points. The first discuss in more detail Jean Lave's form of learning through apprenticeship and secondly Summerson Carr's description of expertise. Thirdly I discuss the human- equine communication and fourth embodiment research in order to represent the full unique relationship among equestrian riders and their equine partners. The combination of apprenticeship, expertise, human-equine communication, and embodiment creates a foundation for the rest of this paper.

### **Situated Learning**

The focus of this paper is on the learning of equestrians and their expertise. I use the concept of learning from Jean Lave's ideas of situated learning. In her book, "Situated Learning, Legitimate Peripheral Participation" (1991), Lave examines a type of learning through apprenticeship or learning while doing. Lave distinguishes apprenticeship from most classroom learning activities, which involve knowledge and a central participation process, which has individuals take on many tasks at once. Apprenticeship, on the other hand, involves peripheral participation, which allows individuals to take on tasks slowly until they reach full participation. Lave and Wagner observe individuals slowly taking on tasks as they participate in a social context. By learning, newcomers slowly become a part of the community of practice and move towards full participation by becoming an old-timer. An old-timer is someone who is advanced at tasks and is entirely a part of the community of practice. The community of practice is the group of people who share a concern or have a passion for something they do. Lave and Wagner explain learning as a social process situated within a specific context. In this context, individuals slowly take on tasks to become an old-timer while also becoming a part of the community of

practice. Such a view sees mind, culture, history, and the social world as interrelated processes that constitute each other.

Rather than looking at learning as the acquisition of certain forms of knowledge, both Lave and Wenger place learning as situations of co-participation. Lave and Wenger both oppose learning as a solitary and purely cognitive process as they do not focus on the conceptual structures involved. Instead, they focus on understanding the social context where learning takes place. It is not so much that learners acquire structures or models to understand the world, but they participate in frameworks of community structure.

Lave and Wenger give a few examples of apprenticeship; Yucatec Mayan midwives in Mexico, Vai, and Gola tailors in Liberia, work-learning settings of the U.S. navy quartermasters, butchers in U.S supermarkets, and non-drinking alcoholics. Both say the first three cases are quite useful forms of learning through the apprenticeship form. The Yucatec midwives provide healing and ritual services using herbal remedies, and their knowledge of techniques of birthing, massage, and ritual procedures. The midwives are almost always the daughters of experienced midwives, as the families pass down the specialized knowledge. The tailors are engaged in craft production, using simple tools such as scissors, measuring tape, and thread and needle. In this case, the masters work individually while only assisted by their apprentices. Another difference among the tailors is they are all men and rarely a close relative, as the apprentice and the family negotiate with the master to take the newcomer into his house and make sure he learns the craft. The quartermasters utilize high technology in their knowledge of production, including radio telephones, maps, and nautical charts. They leave home to join the Navy and become part of that total institution for a relatively short time. They also have instructors and officers and work together with other enlisted people.

Through these examples, Lave and Wenger understand the mastery of knowledge and skill that requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the practices of a community. No matter the example, Lave and Wegner do not focus on what the specific tasks are, but instead on how these individual's identities change as they take on more tasks and socially become a part of the community. For the tailors, for example, the focus was not on what these individuals sewed first, but on how the title of new people or newcomers changed as these individuals took on more tasks.

Lave and Wenger showcase a few notions of who uses the learning process of apprenticeship. These indicate that both men and women learn in this manner while the apprentice may or may not have an affiliation with the master. Other examples of apprenticeship include sports such as Loic Wacquant's "Body and Soul" (2004). In his ethnography, Wacquant writes about his three-year experience as a sociology graduate student at the University of Chicago. During this time, he gains access to a poor black neighborhood on Chicago's Southside by joining the Woodlawn Boys and Girls Club, a boxing club for young men. He not only decides to learn how to become a boxer but also trains for a competition in Chicago called the Golden Gloves. While training, he develops relationships with the young black men and the older experts who coach them. Wacquant's interests bring together two focuses; one the social lives of underclass black men and secondly the body through which skill and persistence interweave in the sport of boxing. The exciting aspect is how much Wacquant's process relates to an apprenticeship. In order to get close to his points of study, Wacquant took up boxing, a connection many of them enjoy. Much like being a midwife or a tailor, Wacquant could not learn boxing through watching videos, but instead by just doing it. This process is slow, but by slowly taking on task by task, Wacquant builds his skill to not only compete, but also become a part of

the community in the gym. As individuals such as Wacquant build their skills and reputation to compete, others see him as an old-timer.

## **Expertise**

Similar to learning, expertise has many different definitions, but for this paper, I will focus on Summerson Carr's ideas. In "Enactments of Expertise" (2010), Carr focuses on the semiotics of expertise, by highlighting the four constitutive processes of socialization, evaluation, institutionalization, and naturalization. Carr's main argument suggests expertise is something people do rather than something people have or hold. It is interactional because it involves the participation of objects, producers, and consumers of knowledge. It is also "implicated in semistable hierarchies of value that authorize particular ways of seeing and speaking as an expert" (Carr 2010: 18). Thus, having experience and knowledge does not equal expertise, as it is something that is created. More importantly, expertise is not just created but performed both physically and verbally. She defines expertise as not only having a relationship with an object but also being able to converse about it. Wine is one of her examples as individuals not only have to drink it by going through the motions of smelling, swirling, tasting, and spitting, but they also have to be able to converse with the individuals around them.

Health professionals, specifically doctors, also use this type of expertise when operating on a patient. A doctor may be able to perform the physical aspects of the surgery. However, family members or friends also expect doctors to explain the process using a language they will understand. In "The Quest for Competence" (1998), DelVecchio explores not only the understanding of competence in the healthcare world but how to perform. As medical students proceed from primary science education through clerkship in clinical training, they move from the anxiety of not knowing what to do to the art of presentation and performance. DelVecchio

argues that as students gain clinical maturity, their comprehension of performance deepens. Learning to perform surgery is just one aspect of expertise. Taking care of patience during oral rounds or a written form is also vital to the performance. It is not only about what to say, but also how to say it in a specific situation.

A complete package of doing and presenting is essential in order to be an expert. The next chapter will focus on the research methods used for my paper. It also dives deeper into the learning process of equestrians by looking at narratives from my fieldwork. It not only talks about equestrians performance and expertise but also the multispecies relationship. Even though relationships between animals and humans are not new, the human-equine embodiment allows for a much deeper connection.

### **Human-Equine Communication**

Much of the human and animal research focuses on “contact zones” between humans and animals to understand how we interact and entangle with each other in many environments (Haraway 2008; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). Brandt (2004) compares the human-horse interactions and contact zones to human-dog and human-cat interactions. She explains that the most obvious difference is the size of horses in comparison to their human partners, which brings an element of danger. This element is rarely present with dogs and cats, but “makes the establishment of an effective communication system” important. Her second point is the distinction of high-level body-to-body contact between humans and horses among their interactions.

“Certainly, humans and their dog and cat companions connect their bodies for reasons of affection, play, occasional grooming, and, at times, for obedience training. Nonetheless, humans do not ride their dogs or cats, and so do not ask them to do complicated physical

and mental tasks while astride their backs. Given this understanding of symbolic interaction, the level of embodiment is central to understanding how non-verbal communication facilitates meaning-making between two species” (301).

She explains human and equine communication as learning a third language and says horse and human are co-creating this language. Since humans cannot speak horse and horses do not use verbal language, together horse and humans must create a communication system, they both can understand. More importantly, “horses are partners that communicate their subjectivity to their human partners’ throughout the process of establishing a language” (301). The lack of verbal communication creates a different symbolic form, in which horse and rider communicate by touch and feel as they are always touching and connected during body-to-body contact.

The general skills needed to create this language happens during lessons, but it is not that easy to learn, and riders first need to learn about balance rhythm in their bodies before transferring it to a horse. Lefebvre (2004) considers the concepts of rhythm to be perceptible in terms of repetition in time and space, “to be in a rhythm, there must be repetition in a movement” (78). Evans and Franklin (2010) describe rhythm in musical terms, in terms of beats. Here equines understand and measure a trot as two beats per measure, a canter as three, and a gallop as four. Beginners generally do not have control of their bodies, let alone a rhythm, are taught the most basic ways to communicate. First, they kick to make the horse go faster or to keep going, and to use the reins to pull back on the horse’s mouth to slow down or to turn. They may also use simple commands such as halt, stop, trot, and canter to make their communication as clear as possible. Examples from the introduction include Tatum flopping her legs and getting frustrated when the horse does not listen to her. As beginners continue to ride, gain control of their bodies, and understand the rhythms and beats of the horse, their body also increases in muscle. Muscles

allow verbal communication to be obsolete and a kick to turn into a simple squeeze, a more subtle touch, and way the rider communicates to the horse.

As individuals grow and learn subtle ways of communication, they, too, learn about how aware the horse is to their body. Horses, in general, have highly sensitive bodies because their bodies are their medium of communication (Brandt 2006). That being Hearne (1982) explains, when riding, humans need to be aware of the horse's acute sensitivity because "every muscle twitch of the rider will be a loud symphony to the horse" (108). Therefore, subtle commands and knowledge of how the horse feels is essential for clear communication. Zetterqvist (2019) considers that feel is strongly connected to the rider's bodily knowing and to the ability to intuitively and immediately attune to the actions and reactions of the horse, therefore creating a third language. She suggests feel is difficult to learn as it is situated within the person and, thus, cannot be easily detected from the outside. Daspher (2016) explains the feel as the ability to both speak to and listen to the horse when riding. McGreevy and McLean (2010) even compare the musicians' sense of hearing to equestrians riding. The timing of aids is dependent on a rider who can combine the correct technique, such as the positioning of the leg, hand, and seat. This work will more thoroughly look at the learning of feel and its effects on proper communication in the data analysis section.

While riders may be able to feel the movement of the horse, a good or great feel of each, means to work together in harmony and full communication. This occurs through the bodies of both partners, which requires sensitivity, emotion, and kinetic intelligence (Brandt 2004, Maurstad, Davis and Cowles 2013). The temperament of the horse and personality of the rider also influence the connection. (Zetterqvist 2019). Horses' characteristics vary as some horses are more sensitive to a rider's signals than others (Visser et al. 2008, Axel-Nilsson et al. 2015). Still,

communication is also affected by the personality of the rider. For example, a more aggressive rider and sensitive horse most likely will not get along and create rough patches instead of smoothness. As “the ultimate goal of riding is to achieve oneness with the horse, a kind of fluid intersubjectivity” (Birke and Brandt 2009: 196). In order to achieve fluidity of an excellent feel, horses and riders must adapt to each other’s movements to share practical knowledge (Zetterqvist 2019).

Learning to communicate with a horse involves a triad of instructors, riders, and horses. Daspher (2016) explores this relationship saying, “riding instructors are almost always experienced riders in their own right, as the level of kinesthetic knowledge required to teach concepts such as feel and successful interspecies communication requires the instructor to have felt those sensations for herself” (92). Thus the instructor relies upon her own corporeal knowledge and empathy to understand the embodied experience of horses and their riders and interpret their relationships (Parvainen 2002). Interpretation allows for instructors to decipher quality riding and good versus a lousy connection. Instructors understand and try to teach the aspects of feel while being the middle person to help riders and horses achieve practical knowledge. During this time, riders exchange dialogue in two ways. First, they quietly communicate with the horse through their bodies, but also verbally with their instructor, by attempting to tell the instructor what they are feeling while riding. Though the triad is essential, Daspher (2016) also mentions riders contribute their skill and knowledge as well as their instructors. This is important to forming and understanding embodiment within the human-equine communication, as human and horse work to develop a deeper understanding of each other and refine the communication process. They create the possibility of a shared, embodied subjectivity between moving together, body to body, united as one (Brandt 2004).



In his analysis of unintentional movements, ethnologist Jean-Claude Barrey (2010) shows how homologous muscles fire and contract in both horses and humans at precisely the same time. The term for this is “iso-praxis,” a body and mind mimicry where horses not only respond to their riders, but talented riders behave and move like horses. “Riders learn to act in horse-like fashion, which may explain how horses may be so well attuned to their humans, and how mere thought from one may simultaneously induce the other to move. Human bodies have been transformed by and into a horse’s body” (Despret 2004: 115). Both humans and horses are the cause and effect of each other’s movements. Both embody each other’s minds.

### **Embodiment**

Daily activities become repetitive, and it is unusual for individuals to stop and think about what they are doing. Instead, they become second nature, something that is not thought about and just completed. One daily activity example includes driving. While learning to drive, individuals have to think about their actions. These might include how to hold the steering wheel or how hard to push down on the brake to come to a complete stop. As individuals gain experience, they do not have to think about what pedal to push or what direction to turn the steering wheel. These actions are completed without a second thought, as he or she is embodied, uniting the mind and the body into one common practice (Csordas 1993). Driving a car or playing an instrument are both examples where people can exhibit an embodied skill. These examples include a type of mindset, but also a thing such as a car or an instrument. Individuals can also achieve this mindset in sports, as researchers are shifting the study of athletes from just a biological paradigm to include social development (Besnier and Brownell 2012). One sport where the shift appears is with runners as they can achieve an intense and focused concentration. During this concentration, a runner might have a euphoric feeling that many call a runner’s high. Some

(Harbor and Sutton 2012) suggest the body releases hormones called endorphins in order to create this feeling. Others (Nakamura and Csikzentmihalyi 2014) call this mental state, flow, a psychological state of embodiment where one loses their awareness of oneself as a social actor.

At this point, runners do not think about running or going faster but are just able to do it. Flow requires clear and challenging goals balanced against the skills required to meet them.

(Csikszentmihalyi 1990) describes flow as merging of action and awareness such that the activity almost feels automatic. Equestrian is another sport that includes these mindsets (Ford 2019). As a rider gains skill and an emotional bond with a horse, the thinking before doing almost becomes almost obsolete. The pair reach a flow state by creating a fluid series of actions such as changing directions and shifting movements. As the two continue to work together, the flow state reaches a full state of embodiment. Jaye (2004) also discusses embodiment by saying, “mind and belief are literally embodied and conversely, the bodies of persons are literally mindful. It is specifically concerned with the lived experience of one’s own body” (42); therefore, among equestrians, embodiment connects, not just a lived experience of one mind and body, but two. The sport of equestrian is a bit different than a runner or a musician as it connects two different minds and bodies of different species.

Much of the research on human-equine relationships refers to some sort of embodiment. Ford (2019) discusses how co-embodiment among horse and rider “happens when the cues by which the rider signals her intention become so subtle they are subconscious, and her awareness of the horse’s intentions becomes so subtle that she subconsciously anticipates his actions, rather than reacting to them” (334). She describes co-embodiment as a learned relationship, based on mutual respect, trust, confidence, and close communication and compatibility. Co-embodiment is also an “aspirational ideal that is only achieved with regularity by highly skilled practitioners”

(332). For her, the highest form of relationship with her horse is a union, by understanding the horse's movements before he or she completes them. Ford also describes how paying attention almost becomes nonsensical, as if she is in a flow that overlaps with her embodiment. The flow in sport riding involves optimal performance and the relationship that enables the task.

Riders and horses reach this co-embodiment state by working and understanding each other emotionally and with proper communication. This does not happen with every horse-human combination every as it is intricate and takes a long time to master. Horse and rider also understand and work together equally, as partners as co-embodiment is only created by the most proper communication of somatic attunements (Csordas 2002), good feel (Brandt 2006), and practical knowledge (Zetterqvist 2019). In other words riders must be able to work together to communicate a third language clearly that they can ride in harmony.

In "Throwing Like a Girl," Iris Young explores Erwin Straus's observations on how a young girl and young boy throw a ball. Straus (1966) describes the girl to "not make use of lateral space. She does not stretch her arm sideward; she does not twist her trunk; she does not move her legs, which remain side by side" (139). The boy, in comparison, is stretching his right arm sideways, turns bends, and moves his right foot backward, allowing him to support his throwing with full strength and total motion. Through this example, Young shows the differences in how boys and girls use their bodies. Women are self-conscious and cautious, not just when throwing a ball, but with how they live and use their bodies every day. She explains, "we often experience our bodies as a fragile encumbrance, rather than the media for the enactment of our aims. We feel as though we must have our attention directed upon our bodies to make sure they are doing what we wish them to do, rather than paying attention to what we want to do through our bodies" (141). She also argues that a sexist society conditions the movement and use of

space. Due to the sexist society, women question their subjectivity and their existence as a passive bodily object. This is also known as the ideas of immanence and transcendence. Immanence is the idea that the body is limited, and transcendence is the idea the world is something to act on. These ideas create tension between experiencing the self as active and experiencing the self as a mere object, as many women experience the self as a mere object. Instead of looking at women and men and comparing the two, my participant observation included all women except for two. I observed 23 women and two boys and interviewed eight of the 23 women. This paper does not thoroughly go into the study of women and gender as “the performance of gender in equestrian communities is multilayered and cannot be understood in isolation” (Birke and Brandt 2009: 190). However, it is unique to find most women riding and competing when riding is not only open to everyone, but a sport to which men and women compete on an equal playing field. It is not by who can lift the most weight or run the fastest; instead, experts judge equestrians based on their performance and connection with another species. Much to Young’s account that women are tied between subjectivity and being a mere object, she might agree that it is revolutionary to see women of all ages using their bodies openly to compete in a sport. Primarily a sport to which they are not competing just against other women, but also men as equals. The relationship humans have with animals is like gender relations. They are both performed (Birke, Lykke, and Bryld 2004); thus, what differentiates this gendered world from many others is the participation of the horse (Birke and Brandt 2009). Though the amount of women in my participant observation and interviews is unlike many other sports, my focus is not on the gender of my participants. Instead, I am focusing on learning and expertise of the human with another species.

The focus of this research is on the human-equine relationship, but much of the dialogue from my qualitative research will include straightforward instruction on and about these women's bodies. Examples from the primary instructor include; "sit on your crotch, do you know where your crotch is, move your hips, think about doing the hula." The instructor stands up out of her chair and moves her hips to give the rider a physical demonstration. The instruction goes even further to talk about a rider's age and her body comparison. Since this rider is 13, the instructor explains how the body grows and changes and could be what is throwing this female rider off. "You have to deal with boobs and growing legs and figuring out how to deal and adjust to it." The instructor then turned to me and gave me an example of another rider who had the same issue. This individual was having difficulties with certain aspects of riding at the time, and it was hurting her during competition. Even though the rider's body is going through changes, the instructor still has her get right back to working on the items that were giving her trouble. It is here where the head instructor's account of the rider's bodies is not to sexualize them, but explain the changes bodies go through and help riders make use of these changes. Without the proper use of one's body, one cannot have the proper equitation or body positioning; therefore, one cannot connect and communicate with one's equine partner.

When learning how to ride, it is essential to understand one's body in order to connect and communicate with the horse. The rest of this work focuses on the feel and touch of equestrians as verbal communication is almost absent. Therefore one's bounce out of the saddle or touch of one's heel to the side of the horse is communicating something, and it is important to be communicating the correct thing. Some bodies, like the one mentioned above, go through changes and do not always do what the individuals want. One of the essential traits of riding is learning about one's body positioning with the help of instructors as they give out exercises and

homework. Both riding instructors not only help but encourage individuals to learn to use their bodies appropriately in the sport of equestrian. Instructors not only help with the human-equine relationship but also to push individuals to use and learn about their bodies. It is the push to be transcendent rather than immanent. Which means instructors push these individuals not to be ashamed or limit their movements, but to be confident and use their bodies to communicate to their horse. This communication is not just by voice, but mostly through touch and feel, leading to a centaur feeling of the two bodies moving as one (Game 2001). Thus, contrary to Young's account of throwing a ball, this work takes into consideration not only riders entirely using their bodies but also the instructors helping and encouraging the riders to do so in order to advance in the sport. The rest of this paper looks at riders using their bodies openly to connect appropriately with their horses to become experts among the sport of equestrian.

## Methods

This chapter will describe the qualitative research methods used for this paper. These include participant observation and interviews of beginner, intermediate, and advanced riders who groom, have lessons and show with their interspecies partner. Groundwork includes understanding the equipment needed for riding and general horse needs such as brushing or bathing. Showing involves eventing, those who compete in three phases: dressage, cross country, and show jumping. Lessons entail riding time with the instructor, where she gives feedback on what students completed well and what could use practice.

The research for this work took place on a farm in Wisconsin for over seven months. The farm is home to 40 horses who live on 100 acres of land. To arrive at the farm, one must turn off the two-lane country road onto a mile-long gravel road. Rural flowing fields and hay line one side of the road while the other side has fenced pastures, home to the horses that live there. The gravel road eventually reaches a parking lot surrounded by four buildings. One is a white townhouse where the owner and her husband live while the other three are barns. Of the three, the parking area faces a bright red one, which stands alone and is home to many of the horses, equipment, and food. The loafing and smallest barn holds the horses the owner uses for lessons specifically for those individuals who do not own or lease a horse. The largest barn is white and gray and is also home to horses, equipment, and food, but this one also attaches to a 60 feet by 200 feet indoor arena. An indoor arena looks like a large barn from the outside but is mostly empty as sand fills the ground. Whips, a few posters, bits, and mirrors hang on the walls while a few low jumps break up the viewing area from where individuals ride. The indoor arena is where most of the instruction takes place as individuals can use it no matter the season. On the east side of the indoor arena, there is also an outdoor arena that is 80 feet by 200 feet. Riders use this in

the warmer months for jumping, lessons, or practice. A camp-site, an assortment of solid jumps, trails, and abundant pastures take over the rest of the land. In one look, it is clear this farm has many spaces for the number of horses who find it home. However, the two arenas and solid jumps out in the middle of fields and trails give the impression this is not a farm of leisure. Instead, it gives the notion that this is a competition barn which requires practice and learning.

A husband and wife own the farm, but only the wife, Kelly, takes part in the equine business. She is the head teaching staff at the barn along with one of her daughters, Ali. Ali originally left to go to college, completed an internship in Kentucky, and then returned home to start her own services on the farm. Students or individuals who ride at the farm vary from seven to 63 years of age, and each has a different skill set. Teaching and riding vary from disciplines such as western, a discipline whose saddle has a horn and often moves at slower gates. There is also the English discipline, which contains the Olympic sport of eventing. Even though the teaching staff educates on many riding disciplines, eventing is the most popular and one most marketed to other individuals.

The United States Eventing Association (USEA) is the national organization dedicated to the education and development of horses and riders in the sport of eventing. Overall, this organization offers continuous training opportunities regardless of age or ability, to experience the thrill of eventing. This USEA best describes eventing as an equestrian triathlon. The sport originated as a cavalry test and comprises three phases: dressage, cross-country, and show jumping.

The first phase, dressage, exemplifies the graceful partnership of horse and rider through a sequence of movements on the flat. Dressage is ridden in an enclosed arena and scored by a judge or judges. The goal is for the horse to demonstrate balance, rhythm, and, most importantly,



obedience using the rider's cues. The next phase is cross-country, which challenges the pair's bravery, fitness, and determination as combinations navigate a series of solid obstacles and varied terrain. Cross Country features several solid fences (15-25 for lower levels and 30-40 for upper levels) and natural obstacles such as water, ditches, drops, and banks. Individuals ride this phase at a gallop the fastest of all horse gaits, but the exact speed requirements vary depending on the level of competition. The final phase is show jumping, in which the pair must prove their precision as they clear a course of delicate fences in a ring. Show jumping tests the stamina and recovery of the horse after the very tiring cross country. Show jumping comprises 12 to 15 jumps in an enclosed arena, in which even the slightest bump could cause a pole on the jump to fall, resulting in penalty faults. Competitors can accumulate penalty points in each phase, and at the end of the event, the pair with the lowest score takes home top honors. Organizations hold eventing shows over one, two, or three days. Events are also one of the few Olympic sports where men and women compete alongside one another as equals.

The competition focus at this farm changed from when I used to rider. Much of my riding time at this farm focused on riding in 4-H. 4-H, is a U.S. based network of youth organizations and focus in engaging the youth while advancing the field of youth development. Competing in 4-H is more locally focused with competitors, location of shows, and competitors. Eventing on the other hand happens world-wide and is a larger scale through-out the United States. When riders look to come to this farm, eventing is the focus over western riding or 4-H competition. Outsiders see this first on the website and through additional 40 acres to the original 60 when I rode. Kelly bought the extra 40 acres to build a cross country course for riders to school or practice and compete on. Now this farm holds a regular event in the middle of September every

year. This brings a larger focus to the farm and to Kelly from around the Midwest and around the United States.

I collected data in two parts: first participant observation and secondly through structured interviews. Observation included note-taking on lessons, shows, and some groundwork, especially of those individuals who were new or younger. Lessons are when an individual or individuals ride before the eyes of the teaching staff, better known as a coach, instructor, or trainer. Wolframm (2014) defines coaching as “aiming to improve riders’ physical, technical, tactical, and psychological skills and abilities to allow them to cope with the demands of the different equestrian disciplines. Related terms such as training, teaching, or instructing are also frequently used in equestrian circles, are implied and incorporated in such a definition of coaching” (75). Lesson times can range anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. Lessons in the 30-minute range are often private or for an individual who rides alone, while 60 minutes is for a group lesson (any number of individuals from 2 to 5). I observed lessons taught by both the owner and the daughter, but many more by the owner. Kelly is still the owner of the farm and head instructor, whom many individuals come to take lessons from. Though her daughter, Ali, has moved home to take over part of the farm. While both instructors give the lessons they also influence riders on ideas such as showing and when a rider is ready to lease, own or move on from a horse to a new one.

Generally, Kelly is upbeat and ready to help riders when she gives lessons. She likes to tell stories and sing songs to help riders remember certain aspects of riding, such as keeping their hands in a specific position. She also uses metaphors such as riding a bike and physical demonstrations with her own body if need be. However, if someone is not listening or completing a task fast enough for her standards, she will raise her voice and re-explain her

expectations on that task. She expects riders to focus 100% on riding during a lesson. Being unfocused or having a stressful day is not an excuse for a poor ride. Ali takes a bit of a different approach. She tries to switch up the task at hand if she notices someone is getting frustrated or encourages them instead of raising her voice.

An example of this is when she is training another individual's horse. The owner of the horse watches from the sidelines and comments on what a good job Ali is doing. Ali then tells the owner of the horse to come over and ride her horse. The owner and Ali swap places, and Ali gives the owner directions on how to get the horse to respond to what she wants it to do. The rider/owner struggles to complete the tasks and eventually lets the horse go to a walk, adding that she is probably a bad rider. Rather than yelling at the rider to get back to it until she completes the task, Ali says, "oh no, you have improved so much and will keep improving, so try it again." Ali then breaks down the task even more, and once the rider completes it, she encourages her to keep going by saying, "keep after him, keep after him, and down to a walk."

As I first started out thinking about this work, I created a list of what I thought were the most minimal equine categories to examine. Initially, categories were broken up into beginners, intermediates, and advanced to observe their groundwork, show prep, riding lessons, and showing. I quickly realized these terms were too broad and had too many parts to dig into and decreased my original categories to groundwork, showing, and riding or riding lessons. Beginner, intermediate, and advanced riders were divided up based on riding ability, community relationships, and interspecies relationship. Advanced, for example, had a high riding ability, a close connection to other riders, and owned or leased a horse they spent time with daily. Beginners had a low riding ability, low if any connection to other riders, and rode the instructor's horses for a weekly lesson, creating a very minimal relationship with their horse. The

intermediates were somewhere in the middle. I observed a total of 25 riders with 10 in the beginner range, seven in the intermediate range, and eight in the advanced range. Of the advanced riders all eight own their horses. The ages of the participants ranged from six to 60 years old with 12 and under being placed in the beginner category, but the rest ranging between intermediate and advanced. Of the 25 riders, two of them were male, and the rest were female. Over the seven months, I spent about 200 hours on participant observation and interviews. Of the 200 hours, I spent 150 hours on participant observation of groundwork and lessons, shows, and other community get-togethers such as the end of the year horse show and Christmas party.

Groundwork means to prep the horse before or after individuals ride. It includes understanding the equipment or the tacking up of a horse and the simple care of the horse, such as brushing or bathing. The groundwork I observed included those at a very young age and or just beginning riding lessons. The age group I am referring to is between ages six and nine, with four individuals in a group lesson. I would try to arrive at my field site earlier than the individuals in the riding lesson because the teaching staff would always need help organizing this group. The instructor giving the lesson helped the individuals the first couple of times so they would have a general sense of the proper equipment or tacking up the horse for riding. Tacking-up also includes safety as the younger kids did not always understand how a thousand-pound animal could injure them or how they could injure a horse. If the instructor had a lesson beforehand, she would send other riders to help the beginners with the grooming and tacking up of their horses.

Since I used to ride at this barn and take lessons from this instructor, she permitted me to help the new riders with the groundwork before their lesson. During the first time I observed this beginner group tack-up, new riders were running around with brushes, kittens, and half-zipped

boots while older riders ran from horse to horse carrying saddles and bridles. Due to their young age, new riders need to have as much time to ride as possible and learn the groundwork with time.

Instead of just taking notes, I jumped right in to help a young boy who was six years old and was having his second lesson. He was small and blonde with blue eyes and seemed way more interested in the cats running around than the horse in front of him. His horse's name was CJ, a horse who had been around when I was riding at this barn, so he was pretty old and laid back for new individuals to handle. Even though I knew Kelly had assigned a very laid back horse to this kid, I had a difficult time keeping him around the horse. Rather than go through every piece of tack, I just tried to focus his attention on helping with the basics. The basics included holding the horse or clasping circle buckles on the bridle and saddle. The challenging part was trying to decide whether to make this young boy focus and do some tacking up by himself or just do it efficiently, by myself, to get him to the arena to ride.

I observed the more advanced riders tack up along with the young beginners. With this group, I focused on how they talked and handled their horses rather than the steps of tacking up because they completed this task so fast. There were also times when parents or others would complete the groundwork for them, which created an interesting question on how these individuals learned this originally. I focused on the advanced and beginner knowledge of grooming, which ranges between completing the work by themselves to needing help with every step. The in-between stage is lacking, and an aspect I could study further as much of the grooming learning happens at this stage. Groundwork is important in the learning process of riding, but I would like to explore it more deeply before using it as the basis of my work.

While observing the showing portion, I noticed a similar problem of parents who completed the groundwork for riders. I also observed that some horses and individuals would not always be in sync or maybe not always judged correctly. In her book “Science of Equestrian Sports,” Inga Wolframm (2014) describes the problem of performing when it matters most.

“One of the most common problems of competitive riders in the world and across any equestrian discipline: in training at home, horse and rider perform admirably, with the horse reacting to the most subtle aids, moving with elasticity and impulsion, clearing the most technical fences with height to spare, while the rider remains calm and in control. Come competition day, the interaction between horse and rider frequently leaves a lot to be desired. The first signs of strain usually show in the warm-up arena. All of a sudden, the horse fails to respond obediently, moving more stiffly or less through than usual. This scenario is only one example where horse-rider performance seems to be impaired by something other than riding ability, skill, or experience” (p. 46).

Wolframm explains how well an individual and a horse can communicate and respect each other when there is not the stress and anxiety of competition. When the two are at a competition, however, there is a common issue of not being able to perform up to the standards the pair initially reached in practice. “While published research on sport psychological concepts in equestrian sport is still relatively sparse, the psychological make-up of riders, including semi-stable personality traits and situational-induced mood and emotional states, is thought to impact considerably on the quality of the horse-rider relationship and subsequent performance” (Meyers et al. 1997: 400). While there is much more research needed in rider psychology, other factors also affect the human-horse performance. These can include injury of either or both horse and rider and the decision to deduct points by one individual. The following section describes my

participant observation at one of the shows where riders battle between rider psychology and their performance.

I pulled up to a grass parking lot of the show destination to hear a lady telling of the time and individuals showing in what ring. I then hear the distinctive carrying voice of Kelly from the barn where I am doing my fieldwork. She is helping warm-up an individual in a sand ring while other individuals are in the ring at the same time. I talked with the instructor's daughter as she does another walk-through of her cross-country course. We started at the starter box and worked our way around a large grassy woods-like area, as she explained how she would communicate with her horse at every obstacle. While walking back towards the barn, we passed the stadium jump course and found a few of the girls walking in a large arena with multiple jumps. The arena is where the stadium aspect of jumping takes place, and riders are allowed to walk through their jump course before they ride it. The humans can see the obstacles and do a walk through to practice their patterns, but the horse is unable to see the obstacles until it is time to show. This can also cause some problems between horse and rider as the horse may decide to be skittish or scared of obstacles because of their color or shape.

Overall, events have a relaxed feel of riders slowly grooming their horses and changing into proper attire. However, many individuals still do not feel the calm, cool sensation of just putting on a few pieces of tack to have a lesson. Instead, individuals bathe, clip, and braid their horses, clean their tack, wear the proper attire themselves, memorize, and attempt to perform three patterns flawlessly. The human-equine connection is put to the test as one does not just have to worry about getting themselves fed, watered, and ready, but also their horses. Everyone handles the pressures of showing and show preparation differently. One competitor has a close family whose mom and dad both help her trailer her horse to the show, tack-up, feed, and

anything else that the rider needs. Ali explained that she asked the mom of this individual to back off and let this competitor complete some of this by herself; nevertheless, it must have been difficult for her as she did not. Instead, the mom braided the horse, put the saddle and other supplies on while she told her daughter to eat before the competition. The trainer also mentioned the mother's anxiety about shows. Even though this mom is not showing, she feels anxious for her daughter and handles it by completing all the groom work so her daughter can sit and relax. The same situation appeared for another mother and daughter duo, as the mom did not want her daughter to worry about anything else but getting herself ready and competing.

One rider from the farm completed the tacking up of her horse but also had her way of getting through the nerves of eventing. This specific rider does the dressage portion of eventing very well. Therefore she does not look at her dressage score until the event is over. Instead of agonizing over a good or bad score, she moves on and thinks about the next portions. Although rider psychology is relatively new, this rider takes the psychology of eventing into her own hands in hopes the result comes out better.

As the day moves into the afternoon, the show jumping and cross-country part of the event began. I walk out to the middle of the cross-country field and find a bench by a tree to which I can see three obstacles. As one rider attempts a jump, her horse jiggles her out of the saddle. She ends up low by the horse's neck but still kicks her horse over the fence. It was not pretty, but the horse went over the fence without a refusal<sup>18</sup>. This rider is also carrying a whip and wearing spurs on the ankle of her boots to help jab her horse to keep him focused. The horse seems unfocused and very unsure of every obstacle he comes upon. His neck is tight and constricted while the rider jabs him with her ankles and whacks him with her whip to give him

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<sup>18</sup> Failure of the horse to jump a fence



confidence over the rest of the obstacles. This behavior is not usual for this horse as his stride is usually much more prolonged and steady when they practice at home. The difference is this is a competition, a different atmosphere mixed with nerves and anxiety. The rider did not fall off; therefore, she did not get disqualified, but she did gain penalty time faults. Eventing contains many aspects, such as jumping jumps in a particular order and finishing jumping them in a specific amount of time. If the rider-horse pair do not jump a precise jump or cross the finish line in a certain amount of time, the pair earn penalty faults. In this case, the rider decided to control her horse's speed to make sure they could finish the course safely, instead of focusing on crossing the finish line amid the time desired.

Another rider and her horse had one key issue on a particular fence. While trying to keep her horse moving forward over the fence, he slowed down and went sideways. The pair did not have to circle but ended up going over the fence at a sideways angle. Though the rider made it around the course, she and her mom worried about the sideways jump, as the judge at this jump could consider the sideways move a refusal. This rider did not have the cleanest ride, as she also had penalty faults. Though the largest faults come from refusals and the decision is in the hands of the individual judging the situation.

Even though showing can be a learning experience, the above situations are common among equestrian competitions. I want to dig further into the psychology, injuries, and politics of judging before using all of the showing data in my work. However, since I am completing my fieldwork at a farm where riders acknowledge equestrian as a sport rather than leisure, I decided showing still needed to be a part of my fieldwork.

Grooming and showing are important for the learning process of an equestrian. However, because of limitations, I decided to use them as complements to the more significant focus of

riding lessons. Unlike shows, lessons do not create pressure to do well. Instead, lessons are a period for riders and their horses to have time with the instructor. During this time, riders are encouraged to make mistakes as instructors can explain the proper way to fix them. Lessons are also the way individuals learn to ride by doing. In order for individuals to want to learn how to ride, they must ride, not watch or read about it, but ride. Without physically riding and learning, one will not be able to move forward.

The second part of the data collection included structured interviews. I used the breakup of beginners, intermediates, and advanced riders to conduct eight total interviews. The eight interviews included two from the beginners, two from the intermediates, two from the advanced riders, and two from the instructors. I also selected individuals whom I had observed and spent a majority of the time with rather than those I only watched ride once or twice. The interviews took place on the farm, often in a quiet room where I could hear and write the answers to questions.

## **Data Analysis**

Luscious rolling green fields line my view as I pull my car into a parking spot right in front of a red barn. I grab my notebook, a pencil, and open my door to find the smell of fresh manure. It is not as strong as a cow, but almost has a sweet smell of hay and grain mixed in. Besides the large red barn I am facing, there is a smaller gray barn from which horses keep running in and out of their pasture. Both a gray and a white one attach to an arena where the individuals and their horses ride. As I walk into the large red barn, stalls line both sides, and there is an aisle where individuals can take care of their horses before and after the ride. Inside the barn, there are no smartboards, books, or even paper and pencils. There are a few posters explaining safety rules, but otherwise, it contains horses, humans, and equipment.

Riders must get their horses ready by tacking-up before a lesson with the main instructor can begin. Tacking-up includes grooming their horses and putting on proper riding equipment. If they are novice individuals, someone is there to help show them and have them follow along with the correct steps. These individuals slowly do it by themselves as they have more and more lessons. If these individuals are more advanced, they complete this task by themselves. No matter if the riders are novice or more advanced, they get on and ride their horses while the instructor gives directions from the ground for a riding lesson. The level of riding ability is much more difficult at the advanced level. Still, instructors expect novice riders to sit on the horse and communicate by telling it to go faster, slower, turn left or right, stop, or back-up. Novices might watch someone else before they get on for the first time, but there is no book to study. Instead, it is just doing with the verbal commands and sometimes the physical help of the instructor.

In this chapter, I explore what equestrian experts mean by the terms functionality and empathy, the circumstances when they invoke these terms, and what role they play in the

development and performance of expertise. While in an interview with Kelly, the owner of the farm and primary instructor, I asked what are the most important take-aways that she tries to teach? She replied with, “I guess I would have to say functionality, even though I am leaning towards safety, but it is not just safety per se, so functionality. With functionality, I would expand to say making sure there is a purpose for what you are doing, by making sure you are not just sitting up on a horse bopping around, but actually thinking about what you are doing.” She then heads back to talking about safety and specifically about the sport of eventing in her examples. “As far as safety goes, I want students to learn empathy for their horses, whether it is swinging their hip to help their horse get through a water hazard or shortening their reins and trying to control them not taking off as they head towards home. Overall I just want them to improve and get better, even though I think any teacher in anything would say that.”

### **Functionality**

Functionality used here means to have a conscious presence and intention. It allows individuals to ride without the nagging of the instructor, telling them what to do. Students learn to think on their own and make conscious decisions in their riding ability about what is correct to do even in unsafe conditions. Empathy has a similar association, as it is the want for students to understand horses as partners, to know its limits and the times when a push is necessary. Brandt (2006) also describes emotional empathy as a loss or forgetting of the other. She explains in the human-horse interaction; however, there is no loss or forgetting of the self. Empathy is more ecstatic as it is the medium through which communication can happen.

Functionality and empathy show that riding is about thinking and doing. Riding knowledge ranges significantly from a simple pony rider at the fair to competition. This sport does not require individuals to keep in shape by weight lifting, running a certain many miles a

day, or even swimming laps. Instead, the only way to practice is to ride, by physically “doing” the sport. No matter how much of a beginner or how advanced one is, functionality and safety are essential. Riders need to be functional to not only win competitions but to survive the day working with another species with a whole second brain.

Kelly believes functionality is the most important aspect she tries to teach. During my observations, I realize there are a couple of instances in lessons where she reinforces this; her exact words are “ride inside of just survive.” “Now Pride, pick up a canter, Katherine no, no, no. Sit back and get him organized, and now you kicked him way too hard, why is he going so fast? Katherine, you are just surviving up there, you need to start riding.” The trainer reprimanded the student, Katherine again, in a different lesson by saying, “to a halt and gracefully pick up both stirrups at the same time and trot again. Katherine, why is that horse’s head up? You don’t just get to ride mindlessly up there.”

Katherine is riding in a group lesson in the indoor arena. Her horse’s name is Pride, and she is not riding him up to the instructor’s standards. First, she does not have Pride’s body organized to pick up a different gait, and then he is going way too fast in the new gait. During the second lesson, Kelly reprimands her for not keeping her horse’s head in the correct place. Katherine is an intermediate rider; therefore, Kelly believes she should not have to yell at Katherine about these issues. Instead, Katherine should fix them on her own. Completing these tasks on her own would qualify as functionality, which is what the instructor wants these students to learn.

Katherine does try to do what Kelly is asking for, but she makes the mistake of kicking the horse too hard, making him go at a much faster pace than needed. Instead of thinking about the horse and making sure she properly sets him up, she just gives him a smack in hopes Kelly

will stop picking on her. This is not the case as she does not use empathy to think about how hard she should kick the horse. Even though she makes mistakes with learning functionality, Kelly also wants her to think and learn about the horse's needs through empathy.

This instructor creates a wide range of exercises to help her students learn functionality. With the lack of smart boards, paper, and pencils, the focus of learning is on physically doing. During lessons, all individuals ride their horses as the instructor gives directions from the ground on what to do. These directions can be anything from first explaining what to do, physically showing what to do with her own (instructor's) body, and creating exercises for the students to practice. Other directions include singing songs to remind them of specific tasks at hand, physically moving student's body parts so they can understand where they are supposed to go, and sometimes yelling.

Some examples of this instructor's exercises include teaching riders through singing songs. These are often younger or beginner riders. "Heels are way down and eyes way up (singing it to the girls as a Christmas tune)." She also gives visual references for kids to use, such as "alright, let's have a canter and think about if you were presenting the tea to the queen, your hands should be light and careful." One reference Kelly often uses when riding a horse is to think like you are riding a bike. She explains when riding, riders must keep kicking to keep their horses going, pull on the reins to slow them down, and use the reins to turn just like one has to pedal, brake, and move the handlebars of a bike.

Physical demonstrations during lessons can include the use of props or other tools. One individual had issues holding her hands in the reins; therefore, the instructor gave her two whips with small black hands or mittens on the ends of them. The goal for the rider is to have the mitten's crossed so her hands will stay flat and organized on the horse's mouth. "Your shoulders

and upper body should be stiff. Think about doing the hula; it is all about the lower half of your body.” At this point, the instructor, Kelly, stands up out of her chair to demonstrate the moving of her hips. The rider makes the horse come down to a walk so she can watch the instructor and understand what her hips should look like while at another gate. Kelly then heads over to grab two whips to give to the rider, so she has to think about her hands more.

“Shoulders are up and independent. When your thumbs are up on your hands, your shoulders look better. Now let’s have a dropping and picking up of stirrups. Shoulders are up and independent. Now to a canter and keep it regular, regular, regular rhythm and shoulders are independent. Remember mitten, mittens, mittens, hands close together.

Let’s have a walk, yay mittens stayed together, and your hands stayed close together.”

This specific lesson included physical demonstrations where the instructor used her own body to demonstrate, but also objects to help the rider understand her own body. This lesson focuses on how the rider positions and uses her body while riding a horse, also called her equitation.

Equitation is not just about how individuals look on a horse, but also how they execute riding tasks. Instructors have reasons why they remind riders to have their heels down, hips loose, and hands adequately set on the reins. These include riding safely to communicate with the other species in a functional manner.

Some other instances of persistence from instructors include a mix of the physical demonstrations, visualizations, and straight-up yelling until someone does what the instructor says to do. The examples below dig into the students' ability to separate the yelling and absorb the learning aspects from the instructor. The instructor not only wants individuals to learn specific tasks it takes to become an equestrian, but she also wants them to learn quickly. Since equestrian means working with a 1,000 lb animal who has a mind of its own, she expects

individuals always to be mindful and ready for the next task or challenge. As riders check off each task, they slowly start moving from a newcomer to an old-timer.

During a lesson in the indoor arena with a group of very young and new riders, Kelly tells one of them, Ella, to grab the reins by the buckle, “Ella grab the reins by the buckle, by the buckle, where is the buckle? Ella then cries as the instructor’s voice gets louder, but she does eventually grab the reins by the buckle.” The instructor tells her afterward this is not the time for crying. Ella is eight years and has been taking lessons for two years, the longest out of the group. Since Ella is a bit older and has more experience in taking lessons, Kelly expects her to focus and have more ability to function and to empathetically think about the horse, when he needs a break from tight reins. When this is not the case, Kelly starts to yell, and the yelling creates tears, which is not a wanted form of emotion when riding. Though Kelly disapproves of the tears, her yelling forces Ella to focus on the task at hand. Kelly expects individuals to listen and respond correctly to what she is asking rather than release emotion when riding.

No matter if it is a simple task of just grabbing the reins by the buckle or trying to learn a flying lead change, which is more repetitive and practice-based, the equine realm expects emotions to be calm and quiet. Individuals do not always understand this, especially those individuals who are young and not sure how to even understand emotions, but something learned over time and practice. Happiness, joy, possibly anger or disappointment are accepted but should be produced only to communicate with the horse. Since Ella's tears are not helping her interact with the horse, her emotions are looked down upon.

This next example shows Kelly’s reaction to an intermediate rider when she does not complete a task. “Katherine, I have been waiting patiently for you to get him organized, work your fingers, and get his head down. There! Why do you make me yell at you, Katherine Baker,



it would be much easier on you if you just did it!” Here Katherine is in a group lesson in the indoor arena, and her horse’s head was not in the correct position. As Katherine is an intermediate rider, the instructor expects her to know this and fix the horse’s head on her own. There were no tears or breakdowns, and she fixed the horse’s head when her instructor’s voice became loud. However, the instructor admits that she does not want to yell at her student, but wants her student to know when her horse’s head is too high and fix it on her own.

Another example shows the idea of wanting riders to complete tasks they should know on their own, but also what happens besides just yelling when a rider does not. A small nine-year-old girl is having a private lesson in the arena. She is going around in a circle to which Kelly says, “now walk.” She takes a while to slow down her horse as he has been going in a big circle. The trainer replies to this, “Ugh! Sit like you mean it now! Let’s do that again from a canter back to the trot.” The trainer waits a minute, “what do you check right away? If you can check it right away, then we can move forward to learn new stuff. Now drop your stirrups” (this is a form of punishment for not looking for her diagonal right away since they were just practicing this task). The rider is Sophie, and instead of getting upset when her instructor raises her voice, she completes her punishment without tears or arguing.

Individuals react differently to different situations, and for some, Kelly’s way of persistence is just too much for them. However, those who stick with the instruction and learn to deal with their emotions, become better riders. Since I have a personal relationship with this specific instructor, I understand the idea of breaking or making someone. It is my mom who explains this to others. When a rider is not listening or doing something correctly, the goal of the instructor is not to scare them by yelling, but to make sure the riders understand the importance

of the task at hand. Kelly's persistence and ideas of functionality assist individuals in becoming better attuned to tasks, therefore, creating a safe bond between horse and rider.

### **Lave and Learning**

As riders learn to communicate with horses, the instructor is the middle person interpreting the connection or misconnection. In the cases above, Kelly is making sure the riders are riding with attentiveness and functionality. This section, too, first looks at the triad communication between horse, rider, and instructor while exploring the instructing and learning of feel. It secondly explores the emotional dyad relationship of rider and equine. Both areas are essential to forming an embodied communication.

Many human equine researchers explain the mode of feel between a rider and a horse is difficult to achieve. During my fieldwork, Kelly used the term feel often to help riders understand when they are correctly connecting with the horse. Two of the exercises she has riders complete to understand the horse's rhythm is learning a horse's lead and diagonal. During a trot, riders may sit, or they may post. Posting means to rise out of the saddle seat for every stride of the forelegs. While the rider is going in and out of the saddle, their rhythm matches one the horse's front legs; as it goes forward and back, this is called a diagonal. After riders first learn simple tasks such as keeping the horses moving and steering at the same time, they learn more tactical aspects. One of these is learning diagonal. Since many lessons take place in the indoor arena, Kelly uses the lingo "rise and fall with the leg by the wall" for riders to remember what leg they should be rising out of the saddle with. Individuals not only learn this skill to connect with the horse on a deeper level, but because it helps with the horse's movement.

During Claire's lesson, a beginner rider, the goal is to look at her diagonal and learn what one she is going with as she posts at the trot. During the introduction to a diagonal, Kelly has the

rider start to post and tells her to look down at the horse's shoulders. Then as the rider goes up with one of the legs, Kelly says up, up, up, up, so the rider can look and see the rhythm of she and the horse at the trot. Kelly then explains she can switch her diagonal by sitting two beats of the rhythm and go up with the other leg. Understanding a diagonal takes a long time to learn and understand, so Kelly comes up with exercises to help riders. Some activities include having riders look down and find the diagonals themselves while also switching the down to a walk then back up to a trot.

During Claire's lesson, Kelly says, "posting trot, make sure your foot comes back. Claire, what one are you on?" She replies the correct one, and Kelly says, "well, I hate to tell you, but that is not correct. Let's have a circle, kick and turn and kick and turn." Claire is looking down but seems to be having issues with finding the correct diagonal. "You are not going to be able to get this in just a few lessons, Claire; it is ok. Kelly explains the difficulty in this task as she says, "you have to look at it as it swings, it is all about motor control and motor seeing, which is why it is so difficult for the younger ones and why I have not taught it to these two (other girls in the lesson) yet. Even for me, after 38 years, I sometimes get fooled by diagonals. I know what one I am on by feel, but every once in a while, I look down to re-test myself and make myself see the diagonal again. Sometimes I even have to double-check that I have it when I do that. Try watching your inner thigh instead of focusing on all your body going with the shoulder. It can also throw you off because horses gaits are all different, and if one is sore or something, it can throw off what you are looking in comparison to your body."

Claire is frustrated because she cannot see the diagonal right away, but Kelly explains this is normal and uses the next lessons to keep challenging her to view it. Kelly also explains it is even tricky for herself even after 38 years of riding. Horses all have different gaits; therefore,

seeing and forming muscle memory for different paces takes a much longer time. Claire's main task is understanding her diagonal, but she also has to worry about her body position on the horse and keeping the horse going.

Once riders can see their diagonals, the next step is to be able to feel them. The goal is to feel the beats of the trot and start posting with the correcting beat. To learn riders sit at the trot and move their hips with the legs of the horse. As horses are all different, some may be smooth, which makes it more challenging to feel a rhythm while some horses are more bouncy and can throw the rider's body up when trotting. Often riders are then able to distinguish between the correct and wrong diagonal as the wrong one feels as though the horse's movement is limited. The correct one, on the other hand, creates more free flow for the horse.

For myself, as a rider, diagonals were very difficult to learn. The first step, looking for my diagonal, included almost running horses into walls or other horses as I was so focused on looking down, instead of up to steer. Even while learning a specific task, steering, body positioning, and keeping the horse going is still essential. Therefore, I felt frustrated with having to concentrate on many responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities included looking for my diagonal, squeezing my legs to keep my horse at a proper trot, keeping my reins short enough to turn quickly and still use corners, posting in rhythm to try and see the diagonal, and thinking about my overall body positioning such as keeping my heels down. My instructor also bellowed these reminders at me as equestrians always have multiple tasks at once. Once I understood how to see the diagonal, the next job was to use my body to feel the horse's movement. In this case, I kept my head up, but I shifted my hips and body with the horse. When the leg of the horse was back instead of forward that side of my hip sunk, and when the other leg was ahead, that side of my hip would rise, and they would switch with each step of the trot.

Understanding a diagonal and then being able to feel it is the first step to fully understanding the rhythm and the feel of the horse. Even further action is learning leads. Leads are which front leg of the horse is reaching further forward than the other leg while at the canter. When in a ring, the correct lead is always the leg to the inside, opposite of a diagonal. Proper leads allow the horse to be more balanced. Diagonals and leads differ in the level communication needed between horse and rider. For example, to pick up a diagonal, the rider has to ask for the trot and then feel the diagonal for themselves. However, to pick up a lead, the rider has to communicate to the horse to canter and the proper lead at the same time.

During lessons, Kelly explains first how to canter by kicking with the leg by the wall; from there, she asks riders to either look in the mirror or down to see if they can see a leg leading. If the horse is on the wrong lead, it causes a large amount of choppy footing, especially in the corners, whereas the correct lead creates more balanced smoothness.

Claire is also an example of a beginner learning to canter as Kelly pronounces, “alright, Claire, get a big walk to get him ready.” Once she is ready, Claire says canter, canter, canter. To which Kelly responds, “there you go and roll that hip, roll that hip, and roll, roll, roll, roll that hip. To a sitting trot. Would you slow him down? Shorten those reins. Now let’s reverse and canter. And roll that hip. Once you are going, Claire, your feet are useless, it is all in your seat and thighs, And roll that hip, roll that hip, roll, roll, roll. Now sit down, and not back to get the walk. Do you feel the difference? Alright, let’s canter again quickly and only use one leg when asking. Alright, and sit down”. Here Kelly makes sure Claire is asking for a canter by telling her to use only one leg and understanding if she can feel the difference in the transition from a canter to walk when she sits down in the saddle instead of back. Shifts to different gaits are all expected

to be smooth. In order to make a smooth transition, the rider must use his or she's body properly to communicate to the horse.

As individuals grow and ride more difficult horses, the set up to a canter gets more intricate. It is intermediate riders like Kailyn from the introduction, where Kelly expects this transition. To learn this transition, Kelly tells the riders to place a bit of pressure with their left leg on the side of the horse while turning the horse's head just slightly to the inside, or a left bend. Then when ready, the rider releases the pressure from the left leg and places a more substantial amount of pressure on the right side of the horse with the right leg. The more significant pressure asks the horse for a canter on a left lead. Without this prep, the rider does not communicate; they want a canter, let alone the lead. Therefore, the horse may not even pick up a canter, let alone the correct lead.

It is at this point that humans and horses must adapt to each other movements; otherwise, riding in harmony will be very difficult to accomplish. That means that the rider must understand how what "buttons to push" to understand proper communication. It is also horses listening to the pushes and responding correctly. This adaption does not always happen right away, and sometimes horses and rider are not compatible where it does not happen at all.

The triad communication between rider, horse, and the instructor is vital to learn tasks and help with the bonding of humans and animals. It is especially crucial at the beginning practices of learning how to ride a horse and learn specific tasks. Beginner tasks include learning how to use a whip and sitting up when the horse starts to go to the bathroom. These are just simple examples, but as riders grow and learn, the instructor also tries to connect the horse and rider through the embodied connection of feel. The instructor breaks up tasks and draws attention to what horse and rider do well and those that need practice. While the instructor is essential, it

also takes the dyad emotional connection between horse and rider to understand the feel connection.

The empathetic bond between human and equine makes learning this sport unique. Some who study interspecies relationships have questioned what a horse is, asking whether it is just a tool in the sport of equestrian, or a partner and a unique relationship” (Daspher 2014). When interviewing riders, I made sure to ask how they describe their relationship with their horses. One individual said, “we have always been teammates, but especially since we are not competing anymore it has turned out to be more of a companionship, I have to grow with my horse in a different way than what it used to be.” This individual explains her relationship with her horse is companionship due to growing with each other throughout many years. Another said, “it’s funny every day. It’s fun because he has this personality of being in Deuce land. He is always there, though, too, with being young and energetic.” This rider's horse’s name is Deuce, and she explains how she knew this was the horse to buy as the pair seemed to understand one another right away. Horse and rider do not have a flawless companionship instantly. It takes work over a much more extended period, but having a great “feeling” at the beginning can allow for an even greater connection in the years to come.

Even though other riders may never know what Deuce land means, to this rider, this horse is much more than just a tool in a sport. The two examples above are both from advanced riders, as a horse can change from just a horse to someone’s partner or best friend. Neither an instructor nor another rider teaches individuals. Individuals learn it by themselves by spending time with and learning about the animal they are riding. “You have a choice about whether you want to work on the emotional material or not, but you do not have a choice about the horse recognizing and uncovering it” (Ford 2013:103). Smith et al. (2016) even present evidence of

horses' abilities to discriminate between positive and negative human facial expressions. When presented with an angry face, "horses displayed a left-gaze bias (a lateralization generally associated with stimuli perceived as negative) and a quicker increase in heart rate" (1). Besides just discriminating between positive and negative facial expressions, horses are also able to project positive feelings such as compassion and know when riders are not connecting with them. These feelings decipher between genuine horse people and those who just happen to own or ride horses, as not every person has a more profound sense of soul/spirit level connection to horses (Garcia 2010). As a rider's skill level increases, it is up to them to improve their emotional connection to the animal. Beginners are not ready for this type of relationship but can learn it as they spend more and more time with their instructor and horses.

Advanced riders not only talk about horses they own or lease as their partner or best friend, but they also show it through actions. While out at the barn on a Saturday morning, I spent time in the large red barn where many individuals groom and tack-up their horses. Three individuals stood with their horses, and I categorized them as intermediate to advanced riders, not because I could see how they ride, but because of the emotional knowledge, they portrayed. One individual talked to her horse as if he was human, saying, "would you stop pawing now, it is your brother's turn to be groomed." Another brought out a pumpkin spice granola bar and proceeded to break-up pieces and feed it to her horse while saying, "I was waiting for these to come back into stores because I know they are your favorite." These individuals took the initiative to understand their horses as their best friends during groundwork rather than riding them. It is here where individuals can learn much more about a horse's personality, such as their likes and dislikes.



Lave describes the movement by which new members move from peripheral to key distributed tasks in her case studies. Many of these include not only understanding what a tool is, but also how to use it properly. An example is how Yucatec wives must know herbal remedies, birthing techniques, and ritual procedures. Tailors must understand simple technology such as scissors, measuring tape, thread and needle, and sewing machines. Equestrians also must understand tools and take on small tasks, such as putting on the bridle by themselves. With time, learning to ride becomes much more than learning tools and taking on fundamental tasks. Riding also includes learning how to form a relationship with another animal. The above paragraphs not only explain what an emotional connection is, but also distinguish it from just a distributed task to a more subjective learning experience. An instructor or another rider does not tell someone to walk mindlessly on a trail ride or to give their horse a unique snack. Instead, it is a silent task as the horse is the teacher, and an individual must decide if they want to listen and learn from them. While understanding what an emotional connection and its importance, the below example explains what happens when a rider does not quite have an emotional connection with a horse, how she comprehends the lack of connection, and how she decides to move forward.

Kailyn, from the introduction, is an intermediate rider. This is apparent because she understands tools such as the saddle and bridle and the fundamentals of riding, such as leads, diagonals, and what the different gaits are. The instructor also explains she does not let just anyone ride the horse Kailyn is on, but people at a certain riding level and who have particular skills. While watching her lesson, I see Kailyn complete the tasks as the instructor asks for them. However, the completion is not up to the instructor's standards as she knows the horse very well and keeps asking Kailyn to redo parts of her ride. Kailyn has the skill to ride, but she does not have the emotional connection to truly understand how to ride this horse like an advanced rider.

When Kelly gives Kailyn breaks, her dad questions her heavy breathing as she is in other sports and not out of shape. Kelly pipes in to say she is not surprised as many athletes try riding and are barely able to get around the ring without stopping. “It is not about being in shape necessarily, but about having a certain type of breathing and flow with the horse. I really do not know how to explain it until someone just gets it.” After the lesson, Kailyn explains riding this horse the first time did not go well because she did not click with him, but slowly started to understand as she rode him more and more. She also mentioned starting to bond with this horse by giving him treats with the hopes it would translate into riding.

Kailyn has the fundamental riding skills, to get the horse around the ring, but she does not have the emotional connection to perform at the next level. Individuals can ride based on fundamental skills, but connections and relationships are essential to ride at a high standard and become full old comers. More specifically she and Thomas do not have a practical knowledge when riding. Since Thomas is older and has competed with individuals at many levels, riders know him as the “professor” or the horse that is reliable and does no wrong. Therefore Kailyn must adapt more to his movements than the other way around in order to achieve fluidity between the two. This starts with creating an emotional connection through treats and getting to know each other. In Lave’s examples, these connections and relationships are not relevant when learning through apprenticeship as she only talks about the distribution of tasks and understanding of tools. While understanding tasks and tools is important, equestrians must also drive to understand their horses as partners, best friends, and teachers.

Lave focuses on the human to human examples of how individuals learn through apprenticeship. She describes how individuals in Alcoholics Anonymous change their identity from drinking non-alcoholics to non-drinking alcoholics. To do these, members first attend

general meetings to listen and possibly share their stories. Lave never truly discusses the range of emotions. Alcoholics go through to complete the 12-steps to become a non-drinking alcoholic or the connection they have with their sponsors. Instead, learning focuses on the simple tasks of attending meetings that help individuals grow through the program. The area Lave does mention, however, is communication as individuals share the statement, “I am an alcoholic.” As individuals return to meetings and grow more profound with the community of practice, general meetings turn into discussion meetings where questions like “how to avoid the first drink” and “how to make amends” are verbally discussed. It is here that alcoholics learn to change their identity by talking and discussing problems with other alcoholics.

Similarly, Kelly tries to teach functionality and empathy by verbally communicating with her clients through songs, talking, and yelling. She may give physical demonstrations on how to hold something, but she also tells them at the same time. Kelly also discusses jump courses and dressage tests as she directs riders where to go or possibly how to complete a new movement. Sometimes clients may ask questions if they are confused, but often it is Kelly asking questions, so her clients truly understand what they are learning. Questions often include parts of the horse, saddle, bridle, and their importance during riding. The lessons do not include books or computers, but by physically doing and talking. Examples of this from above include individuals such as Sophie, as she learns to sit down and pull her horse to a slower gait. For Katherine, it is learning to have her horse’s head in the correct position. The learning is slow with help from a more experienced equestrian, but as they progress and understand riding fundamentals.

Equestrians talk within a practice as they discuss a jump course with their instructor or with other old comers. Still, contrary to Lave’s examples of talking within, equestrians push past just talking verbally to other humans. Equestrianism involves learning and understanding a third

language, one that is unique between horse and rider. As individuals learn this language, it becomes a performance, as though the rider thinks and the horse executes the thought, without mediation or any sort of cue. Still, it is also the other way around on the back of a great horse—it is as though the horse thinks and the rider creates, or becomes, a space and direction for the execution of the horse's thoughts (Hearne 1986 ). Riders talk among each other about this language, but cannot demonstrate it unless they are riding a horse.

With the transition to a dyad bond, the triangles of the horse, rider, and instructor is still essential. The instructor is the mediator to help the bond grow even further, which allows for the master and apprenticeship relationship. This relationship can continue perpetually as learning to ride is not a simple process and takes a lifetime to master (West and de Braganca 2012). Riders often want to keep advancing their knowledge no matter their riding level. However, many individuals do not stay as rider apprentices long enough to reach the old comer or expert statuses. I asked Kelly, the head instructor, about what she thinks makes individuals discontinue the relationship. She explained, “it is more determined by the parents, and if they want or do not want to bring them out or do not want to invest in the stuff.” Many parents, including my own, thought this was just a phase and not a lifestyle I would have wanted to be a part of for many years. Some individuals do not have the money or time to invest in the sport of equestrian. Others may have the resources to stick with riding throughout their middle school, high school, and maybe even college careers, but many then parents may expect their children to start a life and a family of their own. High school was the general cut off from riding and lessons for many of my friend's parents in my personal experience. I asked some individuals about their future goals, and to my surprise, one of them wanted to continue to the big stage.

“My future goals with Deuce are to make it to the upper levels of eventing. I know so many people who say this or have dreams about going to Rolex, but it is definitely mine. I know Deuce has his struggles sometimes and just saying I don’t wanna or I can’t because it is too hard, and it is difficult to keep going on days like that, but it is just how it works sometimes.”

This rider explains that she wants to make it to the upper levels of riding with her horse, Deuce, but also understands how many little girls dream of this. She talked further about her future as far as a college and a career to say

“I originally thought about becoming a vet, but there is not enough time for me to be around my own horses. I also was thinking about training and stuff, basically trying to find something I can do that would still give me the benefits of being able to ride my own horse(s). I would be really interested in something with horses in the future. I want something that is flexible, so I can spend time out at the barn as I do not want to give it up.”

This individual is just a freshman in high school whose parents fully commit to the sport and lifestyle, at least for the time being. The length of the instructor-rider relationship truly depends on not only the lack of interest but also the lack of support, whether it be tangible or emotional. Tangible being the lack of financial help or services and emotional meaning, the lack of acceptance that one can reach the upper levels of eventing and become an instructor.

During this work, I focus on watching lessons and going to certain shows, but riders also participated in other events. One of these events includes the annual barn horse show. Kelly organizes the show and invites anyone who rides at the barn to compete. Although it is a simple introduction to competition for those who are novices or beginners, the main point of the show is

to have fun with the bonding of horses. It is a way for individuals to meet and or see each other if they are not at the barn at the same time. Another event I attended was the “Border Christmas Party.” During this event, Kelly only invites individuals who lease or own horses at the farm. This party did not have beginners at it, but many more intermediates and advanced riders as they generally have their own horses allowing them to spend more time at the barn and become a part of the barn community. With having their own horses, it is expected that these individuals also understand the skills of embodiment communication and emotional connection with their horses, therefore creating a social hierarchy. However, as beginners learn these skills and take the proper steps of to move past the beginner stages, they too will be invited to other social events.

Individuals may or may not stick with the sport of equestrian to become an instructor. Still, instructors teach, and riders learn through the process of apprenticeship Books and videos are not helpful with learning how to ride and have a relationship with a horse. Instead, learning takes place little by little, with physical practice, and becoming a part of a community as one goes. This case study of learning to be an equestrian is an addition to Lave’s overall thoughts on apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is not only a way of learning through human to human social interactions by becoming a part of a community but also through psychological factors of empathy and feeling between interspecies interactions with equestrians. As riders learn certain tasks such as diagonals and leads to feel the horse, it is also up to them as individuals to connect with their horse on an emotional level as this too allows them to move to become a part of the community. It is through these interactions that equestrians also learn to communicate not just with humans by talking, but another species through an embodied third language.

## Reputation

Along with Lave's thoughts of apprenticeship through social learning, she argues, "viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means that learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place, and participation in communities of practice. Thus identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (1991: 53). Both Kelly and Ali are riders and a part of the teaching staff; therefore, I turned to them to ask about their riding and teaching skills while also understanding the membership among the two roles. I first questioned both, what, if any, are the requirements to become a riding instructor or trainer? The owner replied,

"There is no actual requirement by anyone for you to have any certain certification or education of any kind. In fact, I have only been asked about my education 2-5 times ever when people come to me for anything equine specific. I think the success, however, I have had and others have is based on your representation, such as when a client wins something big or a group of kids does well. This is why my other daughter thinks she wasted four years in college when she should have been building her reputation, but the time has passed for that now."

The daughter Ali, the second trainer, replied with a similar sentiment about not having any specified requirements.

"It is interesting because nothing in the horse industry requires you to have a certain degree or certification. It is a big gray area, but it is really up to the people to decide if you are worth going to or not. Examples include if you are ethical with the horses like feeding them and giving them water along with the instructing and training of horses.

You can join the ARIA (American Riding Instructors Association), but it is not required of you, and you can still be successful without it. My mom earned an award for the top 50 instructors through this, but I don't think her success was due to that. I don't think people really care about that, but instead, it is about word of mouth and knowledge. My mom has had a long career behind her, so her reputation is a big deal and is known well compared to mine. I am still quite an unknown person even though I used to live and show here when I was younger. I mean, a little thing could ruin me like when I stuck my foot in my mouth. I was talking to someone about someone else's horse, and it got back to them, and it was twisted around. Even though it didn't really bother me, I have to learn to build my own reputation".

Both individuals agreed that there is no real certification in becoming an instructor. They both based the success of being riders and instructors on how they represent themselves. Their representation of themselves is based on how they treat the individuals and horses and how the community sees the pupils they teach. This overview of how one represents themselves creates a reputation, which I will further explore.

During Carr's sections on institution and authorization, she discusses how institutions authorize evaluative and authenticating practices through ritual ceremonies and certifications. She mentions how "those who participate in status-conferring institutions have greater access to and experience -onomic knowledge, which suggests a fundamentally linguistic division of labor" (2010: 24). The linguistic division of labor is much different in the equine world where being an instructor or an expert does not require a certification or degree. Instead, the equestrian linguistic division of labor appears as instructors learn through apprenticeship and create a reputation for themselves as experts, separating themselves from other equestrians. The community bases



instructor expertise not only on how they treat the horses, and how they treat their clientele but also on their client's reputation as riders. Carr also mentions, "perhaps what institutions do best is naturalize the expertise that has been produced in real-time interactions and putatively expert people and potentially valuable object, allowing it to float across, evermore empowering contexts" (2010: 25). As institutions are not required for an instructor to be an instructor, equestrians prove naturalization can happen without institutions, but instead through the simplicity of passing down knowledge by word of mouth.

An instructor is also known as a knowledge guardian. "A knowledge guardian has been described as an individual who holds expertise that has been passed down through generations and who continues to develop, practice, protect and pass on this knowledge to interested pupils" (West and Braganca 2011: 241). A guardian of knowledge does not hold information because of a particular degree or certification, but because of knowledge that they pass down through learning by doing. A knowledge guardian is one that holds knowledge by being able to ride and form connections with horses but also can teach this knowledge to others and pass it along in a manner that gives them a good reputation.

A knowledge guardian is just one of the many interchangeable terms used for instructing. Others include a coach or trainer. Instructors are those who teach individuals, while trainers are those who ride and work with other's horses to get them rideable ready for their owners. Equestrians use the term coach when an individual is instructing a group of people instead of an individual. Often trainers are instructors and riders themselves, and their titles may overlap.

Expertise among equestrians is a very general term as there are many areas of equestrian that overlap. For the use of this work, I focus on the idea of expertise of instructors or trainers. Instructors are not only riders who compete, but are educators, and can ride and form bonds with

many different horses. The following section digs into the reputation of instructors by exploring equestrian's evolving membership among a community of practice.

### **Evolving Membership**

During my interviews, I asked each student how they or their parents chose Kelly as their instructor. Many of them replied it was from word of mouth or from other people they knew. A couple of the girls are friends from school, and others had parents who are friends. One of the beginner girls explained she was changing from another farm. To find a new instructor, "my dad looked up Kelly on the computer, saw she had some insane credentials, and he thought with those credentials that she would be good, and I would be taught well." Rather than hearing about Kelly and her reputation through other's word of mouth, like the others, this family simply looked on the internet. On her webpage for the farm, Kelly lists many of her qualifications in an "about our instructors," section. Some qualifications include coaching over 100 state 4-H Champions, earning both USDF bronze and silver medals, Wisconsin Horse "Judge of the Year" and "Horseperson of the Year," and many more. Even though these qualifications are not required or expected to be an instructor or trainer, it looks enticing for new riders to see this trainer has some accomplishments, even if they do not precisely understand what they mean or even are.

All of these qualifications are a part of Kelly's range as a rider and an instructor. She won both the USEF bronze and silver medal in riding while she instructed her students and coached them to be state champions. None of these are earned or granted through institutions. Instead, these accomplishments are acquired by what others think of her and the clients she teaches. The website also lists Ali underneath the other instructors. While her mom's section has a long list of

accomplishments, hers focuses more on her specific passion of working with younger horses as she is young and is slowly building a reputation based on her own particular needs and interests.

All the student riders I interviewed had nothing but good things to say about Kelly and her teaching abilities. Everyone on the farm seems to respect her and agree with her ideals and coaching techniques. The surprising part of her reputation happened at the horse shows I observed. Kelly ran a couple of the shows, and she was mostly behind the scenes, but it was a different story at a show in Illinois. During this show, Kelly came merely as an instructor. She did not bring a horse to compete with and was not in charge of organizing the show. Her job just included helping her student's warm-up, answering questions, and giving any advice she had before competing. While she focused on her students, other riders who do not take lessons at the farm would ask her to help them warm-up before a particular part of the event. Kelly is well known and thought of as being trusted to help give last-minute help before a rider competed. While a web page may draw in a client or two, it is the face-to-face witnessing of how an instructor properly understands the human to horse relationship and can demonstrate and teach it that generates a reputation.

The term reputation embodies how students, parents, and the outside community view instructors and trainers. All these individuals judge instructors and trainers based on their achievements as riders, their student's accomplishments, and simply how they treat and take care of horses. A rider can have a good reputation as a rider in competing well with a particular horse or horses. This changes as they become an expert, and earn the title of instructor or trainer. It takes time for outsiders and the community they live in to learn if they are not only a good rider but also an excellent teacher who puts the horse first.

Being a member of a community and having a good reputation is of utter importance in the equestrian world. Kelly's daughters are both excellent examples of this as both used to ride and compete in this community but are now changing roles after going away to college. Ali, the second trainer at the farm, built her reputation a while ago by being able to physically and verbally perform while riding. Today, she still rides and orally performs, but it is up to the people of the community to accept her as an expert instructor instead of just a rider.

The second daughter, Whitney, is another example, as she is building up her reputation as a rider and instructor in the state of Florida. She comes back to Wisconsin to give clinics or lessons for just a weekend, but some still do not know who she is. While at her clinic, a weekend-long seminar, one rider explained that she did not know who she was, but would go to her clinic just to try it out anyway. She then asked me what I knew about her, and I explained how I grew up with her but could understand that since she has moved away, few people know who she is or know her reputation anymore. Whitney, like Ali, went to college after high school. Even though she has a degree, she says she regrets going to school because it has slowed down, creating a reputation for herself. Overall, expertise among equestrians includes the ability to physically and verbally perform an activity and an individual's reputation among the community of practice.

### **Expertise**

In her work, Carr's main point of enactment of expertise is that one must be able to perform expertise. The performance involves a person not only having a relationship with an object but also being able to talk about the object to experts or laypeople. "Indeed, between becoming an expert invariably involves building an intimate relationship with a valuable class of cultural objects" (Carr 2010:20). In Carr's examples, she only talks about a connection to objects

such as wine, a CT scan, and types of hair. While building relationships with objects in the equine world is essential such as bridles and saddles, the most important is building a relationship with a subject, the horse. Maustad et al. explain the details equestrians give about their connection with their equine partners as co-being. She splits this up into three sections, the first point focusing on being in sync, a “rider’s reflection on deep moments of mutuality or co-being between species, moments where two bodies become in sync” (Argent 2012; Evans and Franklin 2010: 324). The second example includes handling one’s own body in engagement and meeting the horse as subject and individual.

“Riders elaborate on several situations where horses and humans meet as subjects, even as self-aware partners. This is a theme that Birke (2009) says, is lacking in human-animal studies. Action and response, depictions of episodes or situations where human and horse appear to entangle as agentic individuals, as subjects, rather than subject and object, are central to portrayals of how communication takes place in the formation of horse-human relationships” (324).

The third point addresses how both horses and humans learn and adapt to being with each other as a form of co-shaping and co-domesticating. Maustad explains it is important to understand the human-equine communication as subjects, communicating with each other, rather than objects where only one side of the relationship can interact. While learning about objects and tasks is vital among equestrians, the most important aspect is learning to have subject to subject communication rather than Carr's focus of a subject to object. The below section focuses on the horse as a subject by giving it the ability to communicate with its human rider.

I head out to the barn on a Thursday morning to find Kelly, the primary instructor trying to get ready for a show the next day with her horse, Darby. She looks at a sheet of paper, which

provides her test or pattern that she and Darby will need to perform and starts to work through it. As she is riding, I notice how she says “well, that could be better” or “good girl” when something good happens, such as her canter transition. Occasionally Kelly asks Darby to do something, and she does not reciprocate, “really, get your butt over there.” Kelly gives her a smack to which the horse jolts a little bit, but Kelly goes, “yea.” Darby seems to be a little hyper and not focused on dressage, so Kelly says, “ok, I think you need a good hack outside. We have been spending too many days working in the arena, so I will let you be a horse for today and hope for tomorrow we can get the square halt.” Hacking means the instructor allows the horse to be free from the more difficult pattern work of dressage and heads outside to let the horse have some light exercise, items that come second nature to the horse, and, therefore, no frustration. She also “lets the horse be a horse” by just allowing it to run around and not have to think about the rider's expectations.

Kelly has the practice of showing for many years and knowledge of the horse she is working. Due to this, she knows when to fight and when to walk away from an interaction. As I have mentioned, horses are more than just tools in the sport of equestrian; there is a specific relationship between the horse and rider. Through her decision to let the horse be a horse, the instructor thought about what she and her horse needed to keep strengthening their relationship for the next day. Hinde (1979) defines a relationship as the “emerging bond from a series of interactions: partners have, based on the experiences, expectations on the other individual's responses” (26). The partnership or relationship is important because it is not only the person's performance that counts during competition but the horse's as well (Wipper 200). It is with this bond that “we not only feel the horse but we feel through the horse and with the horse.

Moreover, the horse not only feels us but feels through us and with us” (Thompson 2011: 224). In this example, Kelly feels her horse becoming more stressed instead of understanding and completing what she wanted. With each succession of interactions in a relationship, each pays to the “positive or negative” valence as a step for the next interaction (Hausberger et al. 2008). Kelly decides the task of the square halt will come, if she allows her horse to relax today, therefore working on the communication and bond between the two.

Kelly initially mentions empathy as one of the critical aspects she tries to teach while riding. Simple examples of Kelly teaching empathy from above include yelling at Katherine because she kicked her horse too hard when she knew not to. For Ella, it was to give her horse his head to be able to relax instead of holding tightly onto the reins for comfort. Kelly wants her student riders to think about the horse instead of thinking about what would be easier for themselves. In this case, Kelly is not teaching, but demonstrating empathy by giving her horse Darby a relaxing work out the day before a show. Because of her ability to empathize with her horse, Kelly made a favorable decision to strengthen the relationship rather than cause a negative valence. A negative valence could create not just interaction, but fundamental attractiveness issues later in the relationship. Kelly not only teaches how to insert empathy into riding, but she also practices what she preaches.

As riders and horses move together, the riders must use their own bodies to make the horses’ bodies the focal point, as literally both accompany the other in a shared embodied experience. Without this empathetic basis, horses and riders would be disjointed and in conflict, unable to have a shared experience of other (Brandt 2004). In the above case, Darby, the horse, was “acting up” by not completing the tasks Kelly asked for properly. Horses cannot speak English and cannot tell a rider when they are not feeling well or when they need a break,

therefore acting out or differently is how they often communicate. It is then up to the rider to be able to listen and respond.

When I went back to the barn the following week, many of Kelly's clients asked how her show went. She replied delightfully, saying she received many of the high scores of the show and came home with all blue ribbons. Kelly shows her knowledge in both physical performance and verbally with her clients. She not only communicates to her horse silently through the body to body contact but also verbally to inform her clients about what is going on. Kelly performs expertise by first performing physically by riding and secondly by conversing with others about her riding ability.

Kelly, like many other riders, has excellent outcomes when they bond with their horse as a partner and create excellent communication by talking and listening. However, success is not always the case, as many have failure moments as well. One specific example from my research takes place at a horse show before and during the dressage aspect of eventing. This rider's name is Jess, and she takes a lesson from both Ali and Kelly at the farm. She is an intermediate rider who leases her horse, Ghost. I notice her because she seems to be getting more and more anxious as she is having issues picking up the left lead in her canter transition. As talked about earlier, this transition is impeding the communication between both rider and horse. I can tell Jess is upset because she yells at one of her friends for not grabbing the correct camera. She explains Ghost, was doing well in the arena, but out here, not as much. Ali comes over to check on the pair and gives Jess some last-minute ideas such as keeping her left leg back when asking her horse to canter and how she cannot just obsess over issues since she is about to go in the ring. The whistle blows and Jess heads into the ring, where she and her horse do have lead problems and go off of the pattern. When Jess finishes the pattern correctly, she comes out, pats the horse



on the shoulder. Ali claps but does not say anything to her as she is angry and upset and lets her work through it by herself.

In the end, the pair received a bad score, as leads and remembering the pattern are essential to a good score, no matter who is judging. This is an interesting example because stress and somatic movement do affect the horse much more closely. Therefore this could be an example of a performing problem when it matters most as the rider seemed to have the most issue right before competing. While psychological concepts in equestrian sports still need to be studied in much more detail, what I do know is the humans and horses were not in sync. By not being in sync, I mean, both were not able to communicate appropriately with each other. This rider knows what a lead is and how to complete it, but was unable to be successful in this situation. Whatever the reason, horse and rider need to form an embodied communication to complete tasks and perform together as one. In the example, her horse was resisting picking up the left lead; therefore, the pair lacked the practical knowledge to create the embodied communication. Even though Jess and her partner failed at this connection today, it is up to her to keep working with her horse until they get it, work with a different horse that matches her riding ability, or give up and decide riding is not for her.

Failure has many definitions in the sport of equestrian. One of them is picking up the wrong lead. Other examples from the methods section include the rider almost falling forward onto her horse's neck during the cross country portion of the event, but still somehow making it over the jump. Another is the questionable refusal, where the horse went sideways, but still went over the jump. Both of these examples did not become massive failures because the rider did not fall off, and the horse went over the jump, but they are still examples of miscommunication. Riders and horses were ultimately not connecting; therefore, it is easy for mistakes and failures

to happen. These examples show that integrated communication is not just essential when riding, but that it is also not learned easily, by simple steps. Instead, rider and horse must come together to learn about each other, to create practical knowledge, to get through the scenarios above without failure. If rider and horse do not create practical knowledge, then failure is an option in learning to becoming an expert.

As an expert, Kelly not only understands her connection or lack of a relationship with a horse but also interprets and talks about others' while she gives lessons. Many riders are specifically learning the "doing" aspect of riding; she also tries to get them to verbally speak and discuss the excellent or negative issues of a ride. "Alright, you are going to turn his nose towards the wall, kick him with the leg by the wall and say canter like you mean it." It takes a few tries for Stella to get it, but once she does, Kelly tries to talk her through it. "Sit back and lean left on the corners since that is the way the horse is going. Now try and get that hinder in the saddle. Alright, and sit back and say woah to come down to a walk. Now, why do you think the hinder was so far out of the saddle?" No one pipes up to answer right away, so Kelly goes, "Come on, Claire?" Claire responds that Stella was pushing off her stirrups, and Kelly replies that that is correct. Kelly, being the instructor and expert in this situation, talks about what is happening and has others speak and learn from it. In Stella's case, it is essential to try and keep her butt in the saddle because of the horse's sensitive somatic responses. Without her butt, in the saddle, the horse may go faster with the expectation of a gallop or may get a painful back created by unevenness.

Teaching not only involves understanding necessary skills but also interpreting the language or lack of communication among horse and rider. Kelly understands what it is going to take for this horse to canter, why Stella cannot get him going, and why it was a bouncy ride due

to pushing off her stirrups. In this situation, it is Kelly's job to not only understand and analyze this situation but also to explain to her students what is happening in hopes they will be able to understand it on their own one day. While other riders and instructors may also be able to understand and pick out issues among horse and rider, people listen to Kelly because of her reputation among the community.

While interviewing Kelly about her ideas about expertise, she mentions how the lack of requirements among equestrian instructors can sometimes have negative factors. "Many of the top riders or trainers have no certification and often have a saying that goes if you can't ride, then teach. This is an awful saying because it is similar to saying if a mare has many suspensory issues, it can still be bred." Here Kelly is intertwining the importance of knowledge and skills with riding to those with instructing. In order to teach riding skills and knowledge, an individual has to be able to understand and perform the riding abilities themselves. Kelly compares this broken system to a female horse having many leg injuries, but still being used for breeding. A mare with many leg injuries would have a challenging, if not impossible, time carrying the pregnancy weight.

After explaining her concerns with a lack of requirements for instructors and trainers, Kelly gave me a specific example of a rider not getting along with her instructor, Beth<sup>19</sup>. Beth used to be a rider in the area, much like Ali, and now teaches lessons. The rider found Beth "scary" as she eventually changed from Beth to Kelly. In this case, the rider decided Beth was not the right instructor for her, reinforcing it is a community's place to determine an equine's reputation. Kelly explained she always thought Beth was an ok rider, but that does not mean riding correctly translates into instructing as reputation is essential. Kelly can bring her equine

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<sup>19</sup> Name changed to protect privacy of this individual

knowledge of agency and empathy from her own riding to other equine-human pairs. While her knowledge is the basis, the reputation of her knowledge among the community makes her an expert.

### **Expertise and Learning**

Lave's social learning theory applies to how equestrians learn how to ride to an extent. The added factor of apprenticeship among equestrians includes the function among the interspecies relationship. It is through the interspecies relationships that riders learn psychological factors such as learning empathy towards another species rather than just completing fundamental tasks to become a part of a community. Individuals also learn to not only communicate with their voice but also with their bodies through a third embodied language. The embodied communication is essential because even though riders understand tasks, they need the practical knowledge of both horse and rider to be completed. The practical knowledge is only formed as rider and horse conform to each other needs, through riding and understanding of each other as partners. As I deviate from Lave's ideas through the equine interspecies relationship, I also examine Carr's ideas of expertise. Carr examines expertise through subject and object contact relationships. Equestrians have relationships with objects, but their most important relationship is with their horses where riders see them subjects. Expertise among equestrians is not based just on performance; by having a relationship and conversing. Instead, it is about an individual's reputation among their community of practice. An individual's membership can change depending on the location and title of a competitor, instructor, and trainer.

Equestrians base an expert's reputation on how well they take care of the horses and how the community views the students they teach or how empathetic and functional they are to both

horses and students. While it is important for riders to have functionality and empathy, it is also important as a trainer and instructor. These are critical evolving roles as an expert; an instructor needs to pay attention to the riders they are instructing and know what is best for the pair to get better. A trainer needs to pay attention to the horse and challenge it by also giving it breaks and understanding its limits, or empathizing with it. Just as the roles of trainer, instructor, and rider are intertwined, the importance of community, functionality, and empathy are as well. Their reputation is not only built on these themes, but also on how they exercise them among the community.

## **Conclusion**

### **Self-Reflection**

I entered graduate school with an unclear focus on who or what to study. While exploring my options, my passion for horseback riding led me to the sport of equestrian. I immediately called my childhood instructor, Kelly, to ask her about completing research at her barn for a few months. Kelly immediately said yes and to keep her updated in the following months, even though we have not seen or heard from each other in years.

It is May when I drive to the barn to set my research further and understand Kelly's lesson times. May is a pretty month as all the snow has melted away, and the trees and ground are a luscious green. I could not find Kelly at first, so I walk up to sit in the indoor arena and take in all the sights and smells. I immediately feel relaxed as I sit down in the sandy plastic chair. I listen to the silence except for a chirping bird and a small gust of wind rattling the equipment on the walls. I smell the sweet yet strong stench of fur, feces, hay, and grain, which makes many memories rush back.

My mind wanders to remembering my daily routine of being at the barn. As I step out of my car, I head straight to the barn to grab my horse's halter and walk back through the muddy pasture to retrieve him. Grooming is the next task, where I would sneak my partner snacks and talk to him about my day. Depending on how dirty my horse was, grooming sometimes lasted longer than riding. Once my horse is clean, I throw on the proper equipment and head up to the arena to tighten my girth and pull down my stirrups. I mount using the mounting block and slowly start warming up my horse by asking specific tasks. The communication dynamic is different from grooming. Here I communicate in complete silence, with just the touch of my legs and little tension in my hands and arms. I do not even notice the passing time as I am focused on

practicing specific tasks, which pushes my horse and me into a flow with complete concentration on each other. Perfection is always on my mind during each ride as I picture my instructor giving me points on what could be better and how I could improve. On this specific day, the barn is quiet, and I enjoy having the arena to myself, but it is not always that way.

My mind shifts to a fall Saturday morning. People fill the barns by 7 am to help with morning chores. Chores include letting horses out to their pasture, cleaning stalls, laying new bedding, re-filling hay, grain, water, and sweeping up the mess when finished. I look down and close my fingertips to my hand to quickly warm them up. Even though it is May, I often blame doing morning chores in the -20 degree weather on my poor circulation. After chores are complete, I and many others go to retrieve their horses from the pasture. We all decide to go on a long trail ride as this day is much warmer than -20. I do not spend as much time grooming my horse this time, but instead, throw the saddle and bridle on to catch up with the others. It is on the trails where we let our horses run wild and jump over solid jumps. Even though I am barely in control of my horse, I trust him not to buck me off his back. We all chat about school and allow our horses to have a break from the difficult work in the arena. Many of these individuals are my competition in the show ring, but here they are, my friends, who give me advice about school and other activities along with riding.

As I take in the quiet and laid back feeling, chaos suddenly crosses my mind as I think about the morning of the competition. Many Saturdays like the one mentioned above include morning chores and a laid back trail ride, but some during the summer include shows. I feel a deep discomfort in my stomach as I remember show mornings. I enter the barn with stiffness, almost a game face, or maybe it is just because I did not sleep the night before. I check my horse and am surprised to find the blanket and sleazy kept him clean overnight. I grab his halter and

drag him to the trailer, where my dad is packing hay for the day. We then head to the show where I check-in, sign-up for classes, and start unloading the trailer. My horse barely notices the chaos as he munches away on some hay. I take his blanket off from the night before and start propping up all the mini braids in his mane. I then apply baby power to his white spots and polish to his hooves.

I complete much of these tasks in silence as I am too focused on my routine to talk. Once I fully groom my horse, I change my clothes, have my mom braid my hair, and apply as much hairspray as possible. I then put on the saddle and bridle and head to go warm-up and have some quality time with my horse before we head into the show ring. I am stressed, and I am focused on completing the task in front of me. As I head into the show ring, my face hardens, and I feel a tension between myself and my partner. The stress is my need and desire to win; it is all of my hard work coming down to just two minutes in the show ring. Unlike me, my horse is calm and relaxed, almost as if he is in the show ring by himself. The simple connection between the two of us calms me down as I focus not just communicating with my horse, but showing off this communication in the ring. As the judge, asks for tasks, my horse completes them almost automatically without me giving too many signs or communication. It is as if he understands where we are and the expectations. As we line up and wait for the results, I release the stress on my reins and pat my horse's shoulder as he did well and worked hard. The announcer goes through each placing calling number by number, and when she finally reaches mine, I hear a loud cheer as it is first. I am overcome with joy as a smile takes over my stern face, and this time I lean down to truly pat my horse and head out of the arena to give him many treats. I awake from my daydream to hear thundering hooves coming down the straight away in the arena, as it is feeding time. I get up and walk down to the stall where my old partners lived. I



close my eyes and give a deep breath as I can still see both of their faces peeking out at me to see if I have a treat. Once I pull my feelings together, I head out of the barn to search for Kelly again.

### **Emic and Etic**

One of my first memories of learning about anthropology includes the terms emic and etic perspective. The goal of a researcher, a proposed outsider, is to learn about a different culture by becoming an insider. Kenneth Pike first coined the terms emic and etic in his book “Language in Relation to a United Theory to the Structure of Behavior.” He originally derived the term etic from the word phonetic, which pertains to the study of sounds and universally used in the human language. Similarly, emic stems from the word phonemic, which is primarily concerned with acoustics, external properties, and meanings.

Pike first derived the words, and anthropologists commonly use these terms for their research. Through the emic perspective, qualitative researchers “attempt to capture participants’ indigenous meanings of real-world events” (Yin 2010) and look at things through the eyes of members of the culture being studied” (Willis 2007). Several scholars and educators use this perspective as being more relevant in the interpretation of culture and the understanding of cultural experiences within a particular group (Garcia 1992).

The etic perspective, on the other hand, is associated most with the researcher as they comprise the “structures and criteria developed outside the culture as a framework for studying culture (Willis 2007). The etic perspective is the outside view, or an approach a researcher takes when he uses pre-existing attitudes as constructs to see if they apply to an alternate setting or culture (Olive 2014). Rather than using past perspectives going into the research, the general goal is to keep an open mind and gain knowledge of the culture with time spent in the present.

There is a controversy in the field over the value of the emic versus etic perspective (Headland et al. 1990). Researchers, without trying, bring the subjectivity of their past experiences, ideas, and perspectives, therefore making the emic view very difficult to reach fully. It is common for researchers to fall too far into the perspective and forget that first and foremost, they are unbiased researchers. Conversely, if a researcher takes a purely etic perspective or approach to the study, he or she risks the possibility of overlooking hidden meanings and concepts within a culture that are understood through interviews and observations.

I believe that both emic and etic perspectives are essential in this qualitative study because of my position among this group of equestrians. The beginning of this chapter looks into my memories and life growing up in the equine world, precisely the place where I completed my research. Many current riders did not know who I was or my story, but they opened up to me very quickly. During my fieldwork, I was not an outsider, but a rider from many years ago who returned for the summer. As a fellow rider, I always noticed when a rider had a wrong lead or when someone was on the wrong diagonal. I would talk with others about a rider knocking down a rail, or they would ask me about a clinician<sup>20</sup> because they assumed I had a background in riding. During one of the afternoons, Ali told me I was going on a trail ride and to catch a lesson horse. I ended up riding bareback, without a saddle, and almost fell off as our horses moved up to a canter. She egged me on saying, “let’s go, let’s go,” and with barely any muscles in my legs anymore, I flew on top of the horse’s withers and yelled for him to stop. The sight was not pretty, but no one seemed to care as they were laughing too much.

Being a former rider allowed me to get involved further. I would groom the horses, and at shows, and record jumping rounds and take pictures. I also would cool off horses by walking

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<sup>20</sup> Outside instructor that works directly with a horse/human pair

them down to the barns and helping by untacking their saddle and bridle. Many individuals at shows have grooms or know how to tack-up themselves, but for beginners, this process takes much practice. Therefore I made sure to step in when needed. Which meant sometimes I missed much of the lessons to throw a saddle on a horse and to stop kids from petting barn kittens, but these are essential parts of the experience of being around equestrians.

All of these examples enable the emic perspective. I am not only studying culture looking through the eyes of the researcher, but I am and was a part of it as a participant. In “Reflecting on the Tensions Between Emic and Etic Perspectives in Life History Research: Lesson Learned,” James Olive explains his thoughts of the emic and etic perspective as he too considered himself apart of the culture studied.

“As a new qualitative researcher, I naively believed that my own sexuality would greatly reduce the challenge of understanding my participants’ experiences, as well as the meanings they assign to those experiences. I thought that being gay would, in many ways, address (if not nullify) the emic versus etic dichotomy since I was a part of the very culture under study. What I failed to account for at the beginning of my study were the myriad sublevels that may exist within each culture and the fact that, like humans, cultures evolve with time.”

Olive explains he thought being a part of the community or already having the emic perspective would reduce the challenge of understanding his participants’ experiences. Instead, he found a great deal of tension between the emic and etic view. Though I, too, was once a part of the community I studied, I believed this would be a good thing because of the ability to access my site. In the beginning, I understood my role in the emic perspective as a researcher who was once a rider. Through the examples I described above, this changed quite a bit while I tried to

truly understand how riders learned. As this changed, I realized both perspectives would be critical to my research.

### **Learning, Expertise, and Interspecies**

The purpose of this work is to explore Jean Lave's ideas about learning through apprenticeship and Summerson Carr's ideas of expertise through equestrians. Lave presents her ideas of apprenticeship as individuals slowly take on tasks to transform from a newcomer to an old-timer and become a part of a community. I found individuals learning by doing through my time at my field site and reflection of my own learning process. It is a slow process of going to a lesson once a week, tacking up, and riding in a group lesson. As individuals start gaining more and more skills, they might tack up by themselves, begin riding the same horse, and move to private lessons. Beyond capabilities, individuals gain friendships and a community to learn from and compete against. Eventually, apprenticeship expands to include not just human to human interaction, but also human to equine interaction. Learning how to be tailors or quartermasters involves objects such as clothing, scissors, maps, charts, and other people—learning to be an equestrian consists of learning how to work with objects and subjects such as saddles, bridles, instructors, other riders, and another species. Lave's examples showcase two main concepts, human to human interaction and human to object interaction. Equestrians showcase three, human to human, human to object, and human to interspecies subject. Even though learning about objects and riding fundamentals are essential, as Lave presents in her examples, a truly advanced rider pushes past the fundamentals to learn from an embodied communication with their partner. This communication allows human and horse to create a third language as horse and rider become and move like one to become partners through functionality and empathy. Functionality

means to have a conscious presence and intention, while empathy is the understanding of the horse as a partner.

Summerson Carr's ideas of expertise involve the concepts of performance. Performance contains two parts, the first being a parallel relationship with another object, and the second consists of being able to converse about the object and relationship. Though this may be difficult, I found many individuals at the advanced riding level who can accomplish this. Many see these riders as very good, but they do not have the title of experts. Instead, the instructors hold this title even though advanced riders may be able to perform the same tasks. The difference is not just in the skill, but an individual's reputation among the community of practice. Instructors do not attain their accreditation through a certificate or ritual ceremonies, as Carr describes, but through their reputation on how they treat both students and horses and as riders themselves. It is the community who sees and judges these aspects on whether to give an individual their title of expert. Rather than go to school or have a specific certification, community members such as peers and clientele judge equestrian instructors.

Both Lave and Carr express their models of learning and expertise as socially embedded. For Lave, learning situates in communities of practice. While for Carr, expertise is enacted through performance both physically and vocally to others. Social aspects are essential to riding, but phenomenological ones such as embodiment and psychological factors are as well. For beginner riders to move to more advanced riders, they must understand ideas such as feel, practical knowledge, and emotional empathy as they all go together to create a unity of communication between horse and rider. Riders start to learn to feel through tasks and exercises given by the instructor, as she tries to point out feel as the first step to create harmony between horse and rider. However, horse and rider must also come to form together practical knowledge

that is also produced from an emotional connection of partnership. Without the ability to connect feel, practical knowledge, and emotional connection of partnership, riders are unable to develop an embodied communication. While Kelly teaches specific tasks such as how to pick up a lead, it is up to the horse and rider to complete this correctly as Kelly cannot make it happen. Jess, for example, understands the task of picking up a left lead, but is unable to complete it and does not have an embodied connection with her horse. This is different than Lave as she simply talks about taking on tasks, but here the skill competency of knowing how to be with the horse in an embodied way is vital for advanced riders.

For an advanced rider to move from just an advanced rider to an expert, in this case, an instructor, he or she must use the understanding of psychological aspects and embodied communication when teaching others. An instructor uses her corporeal knowledge of feel and embodied communication to be the middle person to help horse and rider to create practical knowledge. More importantly, instructors must also incorporate empathy as their reputation based on community ideals. Some of these include taking care of the horses, such as giving them food, water, proper health care, pasture space. Others include the success of the instructor as a rider and the success of the instructor's clients. While some advanced riders may understand this, it is up to riders who also want to be instructors to build this reputation amongst the community, by teaching good riders, taking care of the horses correctly, and riding well themselves.

I come to this analysis due to two reasons. The first being my seven months of research involving participant observations and interviews. During my participant observation, I was able to observe the non-verbal communication between riders and their horses. Many intermediate and advanced riders rode their horses in silence as body-to-body contact is the main form of communication. Some riders completed their ride in silence without any issues, while others

argued out loud, deciding to push to keep riding or stop for the day based on the feel of the horse. Interviews included asking riders about their relationships with their horses as many understand horses to be “partners” and “best friends.” Other answers responded by connecting empathy and compassion to their interspecies partner. While this data helped conclude that phenomenological factors are significant when learning expertise, it was my personal experience as an equestrian that facilitated this addition.

In the self-reflection section, I talk about going into the arena at a show to “show off my horse and I’s communication.” It is here that I rely so much on my horse and I’s relationship that I almost let him take-control and complete the tasks at hand as I am so nervous. It is examples like this that help not only analyze other rider’s relationships, but it also enables me to understand the claims I am presenting on a physical level. Even though I am nervous, my horse and I still appreciate each other on a partner level and share practical knowledge; therefore, we can compete well and form an embodied communication. Without our emotional connection and understanding of each other, I doubt we would have competed so well.

While participant observation and interviews were important methods in coming to this analysis, I thought about myself learning during much of the process. I remember being a beginner and learning to hold items such as a whip and when to use it properly. I also remember learning diagonals and leads and how difficult they were to understand and execute. I remember creating the practical knowledge between myself and my horse as he started to bend in the corners automatically, and I released most of my pressures to create an embodied connection. For riders to learn to become experts, they learn to take on tasks, but they also learn skills. In this case, the most important is learning the skill of embodied communication with and equine subject, as it is essential to achieving expert horsemanship.

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