

Grit and Grace Horses (USA) – Impronte Equine (Italia). Workshop on the relationship between horses and US military personnel living in Italy

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Introduction

In recent decades, anthropological research and more generally interdisciplinary studies have contributed to enriching the debate on the relationship between humans and animals. These studies focus mainly on specific areas such as the food industry (García-Rosell & Hancock, 2024), the tourism sector (Wadham & Dashper, 2024) and animal rights studies (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011), paying particular attention



Impronte Equine (Italy), a pilot project focussing on the relationship between humans and horses. First presentation at Fieracavalli in Verona. Photo by Mic

to phenomena such as intensive farming and vivisection practises. From an anthropological perspective, some of the literature has focused on the ideas of co-evolution of relationships and intersubjectivity between humans and pets, as in the case of dogs (Haraway, 2003), also exploring the symbolic aspects related to human affection for pets and the moral implications of animal exploitation (Serpell, 1986). Other contributions have instead analysed the dynamics of the relationship between humans and wild animals, such as wolves. Jenny Barry (2016) analyses the cultural representations of the wolf and its role in ecological and symbolic narratives.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, the author examines how wolves are perceived in different cultural contexts and how these perceptions influence conservation policy and the practise of coexistence between humans and wildlife. In parallel, Tim Ingold (1994) proposes a reflection on the historical development of human-wildlife relations that offers an alternative perspective to traditional narratives of domination and control. Ingold emphasises trust and cooperation as fundamental elements in the interaction between humans and animals. Other research has focussed on the relationship between animals and their owners and how this bond is influenced by various contextual factors, such as the environment in which these relationships develop (DeMello, 2012). In recent decades, significant projects have emerged that examine the human-animal relationship by proposing a new paradigm that goes beyond the traditional centrality of humans. This approach deconstructs the epistemological assumptions underlying the concept of “identity” and emphasises its connection with other forms of identity. Among these contributions, Roberto Marchesini’s programme stands out, which:

«It rethinks the conceptual grid that Western culture has used for centuries to filter the concept of “us”, the idea of who the “others” are and our notions of human ethnicity. Otherness, as it is currently viewed, corresponds to the human need to draw boundaries within which a fixed epistemology can be constructed, which, according to the author, is a pure onto-epistemic illusion (...). Relational ontology is the first step (...) towards a rethinking of the human being that is not closed in its identity, but open to the continuous construction of identity thresholds (Armano 2018)»^[1].

This article deals with the relationship between humans and horses, a topic that has been the subject of numerous studies examining its various symbolic and material dimensions. Among other studies, Ann Game (2001) examines the relationship between riders and horses using the term “centaur”, which is understood to symbolise the union of human and animal. By analysing riding as an embodied practise, the author explores how the physical and emotional relationship between rider and horse produces a particular form of shared subjectivity. Barbara Ghiringhelli (2016), on the other hand, focuses on the relationship between an owner with first experience of horses and their animal and examines how this relationship is influenced by cultural factors related to the owner’s or rider’s level of knowledge.

This paper presents preliminary data from an Italian branch of Grit and Grace Horses/Impronte Equine pilot project, which aims to develop a collaborative programme between the United States and Italy to study the relationship between the horse and the category of military soldiers. This initiative was born from the need to tackle a complex and persistent problem, namely the management of the psychological suffering of soldiers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Numerous studies have shown that the

number of suicides in the United States among soldiers and veterans since 2001 is four times higher than the number of deaths in combat: more than 30,000 suicides compared to around 7,000 deaths in action (Suitt, 2021).

Contextualising the analysis: exploring the human-horse relationship for American soldiers

In Italy, the relationship between humans and animals, formerly known as pet therapy, is regulated by the national guidelines for animal-assisted interventions (IAA). This legislation establishes quality and operational standards designed to ensure the safety and effectiveness of interventions and to promote a balanced and respectful interaction between operators, beneficiaries and animals. IAAs are structured projects with the aim of improving the health and physical, psychological and social well-being of people through interaction with pets. Animal-assisted interventions (AIA) are divided into different types, each with specific objectives and working methods:

- Animal-assisted therapies (AAT): personalised therapeutic interventions aimed at treating physical, neuropsychomotor, sensory, psychological and relational disorders.
- Animal-assisted education (EAA): educational interventions to promote personal development, improve social relationships and inclusion, often carried out in a group context.
- Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA): Recreational and socialisation activities to improve the quality of life and promote the relationship between humans and animals.

The implementation of these activities requires the involvement of a multidisciplinary team made up of various professionals, such as a project manager, an activity referent, an animal assistant and a veterinarian specializing in IAA

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[animali/approfondimenti/](https://www.izsvenezie.it/temi/relazione-uomo-animale/interventi-assistiti-animali/approfondimenti/)). This team works together to design, implement and monitor each intervention, ensuring high safety and quality standards. Animals involved in animal-assisted interventions must be carefully selected, monitored and assessed to ensure that they are suitable in terms of both health and behaviour. This process must be carried out with full regard to their welfare and in accordance with applicable ethical and bioethical regulations. Respect for the animal as a sentient subject is a key principle at every stage of AAI. This approach aims to ensure that the relationship established between humans and animals is ethical, reciprocal and beneficial to all parties involved.



Presentation of the activity set in Impronte Equine with the American military corps at Fieracavalli in Verona. Photo by Giuliana Marple

In the United States, Equine-Assisted Services (EAS) encompass a variety of approaches and services that involve interactions between humans and horses and have gained significant popularity in recent years. These approaches are used to promote learning, personal growth, or to achieve therapeutic results and emotional, cognitive and physical benefits. One of the most important of these approaches is Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL), which focuses on experiential learning and personal development and is often used in education, leadership training and team building. Among the organisations committed to these services is Eagala (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association), which offers a ground-based learning model led by a licensed mental health professional and an equine specialist. PATH Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International), which provides certification and guidelines for EAL and therapy. The forms of equine-assisted therapy also include Equine-Assisted Therapy (EAT) and Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP). EAT is a form of experiential therapy in which interaction with horses provides emotional support and psychological well-being. Instead, EAP is a form of psychotherapy that involves interactions with horses under the supervision of licenced therapists. In the United States, there are also clinical applications of these approaches, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment for veterans, trauma therapy for survivors of abuse, and mental health support for youth and families.

This study focuses on the relationships between horses and American soldiers living in Italy and working at the military base Ederle in Vicenza, the headquarters of the United States Army Africa (USARAF). The first presentation of the project took place in November 2024 at the “Fieracavalli Verona”, the most important annual international event in Italy dedicated to the world of horses and equestrian sports. During the trade fair event, Impronte Equine signed a declaration of intent aimed at creating an emotional relationship experience with horses. On this occasion, the military corps working at Caserma Ederle was also involved in the activities. As the young soldiers testified, this experience already brought about clear changes on an emotional level, which also extended to the following days. In addition, the audience present was also involved in the relationship with the horse on this occasion. The results obtained at the “Fieracavalli Verona” encouraged the team of experts to further explore these relationship dynamics, at the suggestion of the constable who had carried out the activities with the horses in the pavilion of the fair. Thanks to his suggestion, the team continued the desire to develop workshops focussing on the interaction between soldiers and horses to disseminate their emotional and educational benefits.

This analysis is focused on the first workshop organised in Italy on 26 April 2025 at the La Melagrana training centre in collaboration with the social cooperative La Città degli Asini in Polverara in the province of Padua. The event was attended by 8 American soldiers interested in exploring the relational dynamics that arise in the relationship with horses. In addition to the soldiers, Lorena Lelli, founder and president of La Melagrana, took part in the workshop, accompanied by her family.

The workshop was led by Giuliana Marple, professor at the University of Utah, founder of Grit & Grace Horses in the United States and co-founder of the Impronte Equine Project in Italy. Also present as workshop assistants were Michele Marconi, co-founder of the Impronte Equine project with Prof Marple and Linda Armano, cultural anthropologist at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Together with Dr Marconi, she analysed the dynamics of the relationship between soldiers and horses that emerged during the proposed activities and presented ways of understanding the human-animal relationship from perspectives derived from indigenous knowledge.

Methodology

In methodological terms, this preliminary analysis is based on data collected using the ethnographic method of participant observation, which enabled us to understand the complex relationship dynamics between the soldiers and horses involved. This method therefore allowed us not only to observe visible behaviours, but also to capture the meanings that the participants attached to their experiences, with particular attention to the relational and emotional aspects. The facilitators of the workshop took a moderate position, combining active participation in the activities with an analytical and reflective stance. The physical and non-verbal dynamics between the soldiers and the horses were therefore observed. The analysis focused on posture, gestures and attitudes that may indicate emotional or relational changes. With this difficulty, it was also possible to document moments of tension or rapprochement with the horses and show how these stimulated discussion among the participants and encouraged the sharing of personal experiences. Spontaneous narratives that emerged during the activities were then collected, reflecting the soldiers' perceptions of horses as relational agents. In this preliminary analysis, we have therefore captured nuances that are difficult to access using other methods such as quantitative or solely verbal methods.



Horse-assisted meditation activities with the US military at Fieracavalli in Verona. Photo by Michele Marconi

From a methodological point of view, the Impronte Equine project proposes an innovative paradigm that integrates anthropology, psychology and more-than-human approaches. This approach allows us to develop a replicable theoretical and practical model that aims to understand and address the systems for treating suffering that arise from interspecies dynamics. This model is not limited to contributing to the rehabilitation of soldiers or vulnerable social groups but defines new relationships between humans and non-humans within the framework of rehabilitation itself.

The main theoretical foundation of the project is based on relational ontology, in line with the theories of Bruno Latour (2005) and the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) model. On a conceptual level, the project aims to overcome the modern dualism between nature and culture and instead propose a perspective in which each entity is defined by its relations

to other entities. Preliminary data collected through participant observation show that the analysis cannot ignore the consideration of horses and humans as active actors within a non-hierarchical but evenly distributed network (Latour 1993). Relational ontology also emphasizes the dynamic and processual nature of relationships that emerge and change through the constant interaction between human and non-human actors. These relationships are not seen as neutral but rather influenced by the way each actor translates the actions of others according to their own perspective, thus redefining the network in which they operate (Callon 1986). This approach allows us to understand social and natural phenomena as hybrid entanglements that favor an integrated understanding of multispecies networks (Latour 1991). The project also opens up to the integration of alternative knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge, which can provide models of interaction based on reciprocity and respect. These contributions enrich the theoretical and methodological framework and allow us to explore new ways of relating between humans and non-humans.

From the perspective of a psychological analysis, interaction with the horse can facilitate the processing of suffering, as it allows access to emotional content that is difficult to express verbally. The horse acts as an emotional mirror and helps the soldier to recognise and regulate his emotions. In this perspective, the horse is not seen as a passive instrument, but as a relationship partner that helps to shape meanings and dynamics and promotes interactions based on cooperation.

Based on this approach, the Impronte Equine project offers experiential workshops focussing on body language and non-verbal communication. Through these activities, participants can explore processes of constructing alternative identities in comparison to the original ones, opening the way for new possibilities of expression and transformation. In this way, the project contributes to creating replicable frameworks for innovative therapeutic interventions based on a relational ontology, with the aim of promoting social rehabilitation programmes for soldiers and other vulnerable groups.

Results of the first workshop held in Italy as part of the Impronte Equine program

The workshop was based on ground activities where participants worked with horses and learnt basic care such as grooming, leading and feeding. These activities aimed to improve self-confidence, sense of responsibility and communication skills while teaching respect for boundaries and non-verbal signals. The activities also focussed on developing mutual trust between humans and horses through non-forced but gentle interaction and through contact and presence. These exercises helped participants to explore feelings related to, for example, vulnerability, acceptance and



emotional regulation. Activities were also suggested aimed at noticing and reflecting on one's own emotions that arose from simply observing horses in the pasture to encourage

Activity to develop the relationship between humans and horses through a guided meditation. Photo by Giuliana Marple

better listening to one's own feelings and reduce stress. Participants practised leading horses through body language, focusing on intention rather than force. These activities were designed to develop awareness of the importance of coherence between thoughts, feelings and actions. All activities were delivered by trained professionals and tailored to the needs of our group of soldiers to achieve specific learning objectives.

In the context of the workshop conducted with military personnel from the Ederle military base, we observed how interaction with horses initiated a process of deconstruction of rigid behavioural patterns associated with military culture. Table 1 summarizes the key findings from these workshops and shows how ideals of strength, authority and control were re-evaluated through non-verbal communication and empathetic interaction with the horses. Participants showed significant changes, moving from authoritarian attitudes to more cooperative and emotionally sensitive behaviours.

Aspects analysed	
Military discipline	Observations in the workshop (relationship between soldiers and horses)
Ideals of strength and authority that dominate military culture	The relationship with horses challenges the idea of control and strength and requires empathy and non-verbal communication
The workshop can challenge the idea of hierarchy and highlights the importance of vulnerability	Activities with horses required calm and emotional management and fostered an environment in which soldiers could explore a more flexible and co-operative self
During the workshop, soldiers with authoritarian tendencies changed their behaviour to work with horses	The soldiers' reactions to the horses were documented by observing changes in body language and interaction with other soldiers
The dynamic between soldiers and horses makes it clear that authority must be negotiated with mutual respect and not imposed	Soldiers who showed empathy towards horses built a more effective relationship and fostered better relationships with their comrades

The workshop offered a space-time based on collaboration and emotional sensitivity	From observation, it was understood that activities with horses have a transformative potential to overcome models of military behaviour
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Table 1 Deconstruction process of the original behaviours of the soldiers participating in the workshop

In anthropology, particularly in medical anthropology and more-than-human studies, the specific relationship between soldiers and horses is still a relatively unexplored topic, with a few exceptions (e.g. Cudworth & Hobden 2015; Ward 2024). However, what emerged during the workshop at La Melagrana training center highlighted the significant and complex dynamics that characterize the interaction between a professional category of soldiers, associated with ideals of resilience and invulnerability, and a non-human being that challenges these expectations. Soldiers, who are often portrayed as emotionally or physically invulnerable figures, have found in horses not only a way of coming to terms with their own vulnerability, but also an opportunity to build relationships that go beyond the traditional paradigms of strength and control. From this perspective, the horse has assumed a crucial role as a relational agent, enabling forms of interaction that deconstruct stereotypical representations of the soldier and open new possibilities for understanding human subjectivity within broader cross-species webs of connection. Thus, from an anthropological perspective, the workshop represented a liminal state in which the soldiers were confronted with alternative models of behaviour to those traditionally associated with the values of authority prevalent in the context of military life. The observation of how soldiers, initially characterized by a rigid and authoritarian attitude, gradually adapted their behaviour to communicate effectively with animals also implicitly showed a gradual change in their perception of the assertive idea that traditionally shapes their role within the group.



Meditation with horses as part of the Impronte Equine project during the workshop at La Melagrana Training Centre, Polverara (PD). The horses were accompanied by an assistant and walked around the participants to promote relaxation. Photo by Giuliana Marple

During the workshop activities, moments of frustration or failure in dealing with horses stimulated open discussions about personal difficulties in dealing with animals. These moments allowed the soldiers to recognize their own weaknesses and perceive those of others as an element of connection rather than weakness. This process was facilitated by the workshop approach, which emphasised the relational aspect rather than evaluating success in terms of physical performance or authority exercised. Participants were therefore encouraged to consider the way they interact with the horses as an important indicator of success. This change in perspective helped to deconstruct the competitive

and hierarchical mentality typical of the military context and shift the focus to shared goals and personal growth. As the activities progressed, the traditionally assigned roles became fluid, allowing the soldiers to explore new ways of interacting. For example, those who initially had more difficulty approaching the horses found other ways to contribute, such as offering moral support or helping their comrades interpret the animals' behaviour. In our analysis, these new roles were interpreted as an alternative to the rigid division of tasks typical of the military structure, which favoured a more fluid and cooperative reorganization within the activities structured in the workshop. This process allowed the soldiers to experience new forms of leadership, which translated into a leading attitude towards the horse. We then began to explore the extent to which the dynamics created during the workshop in complex contexts, such as post-traumatic stress, could also have a significant impact on the soldiers' reintegration into civil society and on the renegotiation of their personal identity. During the proposed activities, a therapeutic potential in the management of psychological distress processes was demonstrated. The relationship with the horses, characterized by physical and non-verbal interactions, proved to be useful in promoting relaxation and reducing symptoms of hypervigilance, which is a possible tool for overcoming the challenges related to psychosocial recovery.

Applying the theoretical lens of relational ontology, it becomes clear how traditional anthropocentric paradigms are challenged in the relationship between soldier and horse in the Equine Footprints/Impronte Equine project. The interaction between human and non-human provides fertile ground for examining the role of the horse not just as a simple tool, but as an actor that actively participates in the construction of new forms of subjectivity. Through its body language, the horse takes on the role of a symbolic mediator and facilitates access to deep emotional content that is difficult to verbalise. As Roberto

Marchesini's reflections (Armano, 2018) also suggest, this dynamic opens spaces of resignification in which the human being, coming to terms with his own biological and cultural incompleteness (Remotti, 2013), also finds a way to compensate for this incompleteness in interaction with the non-human other. This process not only deconstructs the Cartesian dualism between mind and body but also favours the adoption of a more holistic and interconnected view of the human being. In the context of Equine Footprints, the interaction between different species therefore demonstrates the transformative potential of a relational approach, where the human and the non-human collaborate in the creation of new meanings, paving the way for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of interspecies relationships.



Demonstration of where the horse's organs are located, especially the heart. Photo by Giuliana Marple

From the perspective of constructivist and cognitive learning theories, which are also supported by neuroscience, the workshop allowed us to see how participants' learning and psychological well-being were favoured by direct experience, active reflection and emotions. During the workshop, we began to analyse the changes in the constructs of stress, anxiety, loneliness and fear using a questionnaire completed before (T0) and after (T1) the experience with the horses to assess individual and collective changes. The questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and contained seven items that analysed aspects such as control, responsibility, social support, fear, loneliness, anxiety and tension for no apparent reason. The survey took place before and after the activity so that a comparative analysis of the individual responses was possible.

In the following, a detailed analysis of the responses of six participants shows the changes between T0 and T1:

Person 1 (P1): Perception of control over life improved, indicating an increase in feelings of autonomy. The feeling of being overwhelmed decreased significantly, indicating a reduction in stress related to responsibility. Social support remained stable, as did anxiety. Loneliness improved and anxiety and tension also decreased, indicating a general improvement in emotional state.

Person 2 (P2): Perception of control remained stable, however daily responsibilities are perceived as less overwhelming. Perception of support remained unchanged, while anxiety increased slightly, suggesting that some anxiety may have increased due to the new situations. Loneliness remained stable, but anxiety and tension increased, suggesting that the experience had different effects.

Person 3 (P3): Perception of control improved while sense of responsibility decreased, indicating greater autonomy. Perception of support increased slightly. Fears remained stable, as did loneliness. However, a reduction in anxiety and tension was observed, indicating a general emotional improvement.

Person 4 (P4): Stable responses between T0 and T1 indicate that this person perceived no significant changes in emotional state or perception of control, anxiety or support.

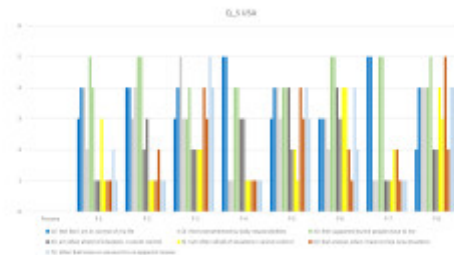
Person 5 (P5): Perception of control improved, feeling of being overwhelmed decreased, as did fears. Loneliness decreased, as did anxiety and tension, indicating positive effects of the experience.

Person 6 (P6): Perceptions of control and support remained stable. However, a decrease in anxiety and tension was noted, while loneliness remained stable. These data indicate an emotional improvement in some aspects.

Person 7 (P7): Stable results, with little fluctuation, indicating a stable perception of emotions and feelings of control and support.

Person 8 (P8): An improvement in feelings of control and support is noted in this person (higher responses), while some dimensions such as loneliness and anxiety show less marked but still positive changes, indicating a possible positive effect of the activity.

Figure 1. Differences between conditions T0 (before the experience) and T1 (after the experience) in relation to the seven questions used to measure perceived stress



The analysis of the changes in the responses between T0 and T1 generally shows a trend of perceived improvement in many of the dimensions analysed. Many people noted an increase in feelings of control and support and a decrease in feelings of fear, anxiety, loneliness and tension. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that interaction with horses can promote emotional well-being and emotion regulation. This is consistent with theoretical models that emphasise the importance of active experience and emotional deepening in the process of learning and personal growth.

From a psychological perspective, the analysis that emerged from the workshop activities emphasised the understanding of the psycho-emotional mechanisms that are activated in response to new and challenging experiences (Bonanno, 2004; Rutter, 2012). This initial analysis of the processes involved makes it clear how individual reactions are influenced by specific relationship dynamics that can favour or hinder the process of adapting to new situations (Ogden et al. 2006; Van der Kolk, 2014).



Mindfulness exercise at La Melagrana Training Centre. Photo by Giuliana Marple

In the military context, this analysis has a special significance. Military culture and training require soldiers to subordinate their value system and personal emotional baggage to a role of obedience and discipline. Often these individuals tend to maintain an attitude of emotional control characterised by a kind of detachment from themselves and others. However, dealing with environments and situations in which obedience translates into an interspecific relationship with the horse – a sensitive and reactive animal – opens up a space for comparison in which two beings of different species must mutually find a point of common motivation or, on the contrary, a point of demarcation (Bonanno, 2004; Rutter, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2014).

Conclusions

The approach taken in the Equine Footprints/Impronte Equine project has considerable potential to influence the practise of suffering management, particularly in relation to certain social categories. In particular, the adoption of a theoretical framework based on a relational ontology that values the role of the horse as a relational actor contributes to the development of therapeutic approaches that focus on the relationship rather than exclusively on the individual. This paradigm promotes a greater awareness of the connections between people and other actors within a complex system and supports interventions that view the person as the result of multiple and intricate relationships with the surrounding environment. Furthermore, adopting this perspective can lead to more flexible and adaptable therapeutic practises that are able to respond to the needs of people from different cultural and social backgrounds. Integrating a relational paradigm into therapeutic practise may therefore represent a step forward towards approaches that can promote not only individual wellbeing but also wider cultural change to improve relationships.



Conscious walking with the horse at La Melagrana Training Centre. Photo by Giuliana Marple

As Roberto Marchesini's reflections also suggest (Armano, 2018), the dynamics that developed during the workshop opened spaces of redefinition in which the human being, coming to terms with his own biological and cultural incompleteness (Remotti, 2013), also found a way to compensate for this incompleteness in the interaction with the non-human other. This process not only deconstructs the Cartesian dualism between mind and body but also favours the adoption of a more holistic and interconnected view of the human being. In the context of Impronte Equine, the interaction between different species therefore demonstrates the transformative potential of a relational approach, where the human and the non-human collaborate in the creation of new meanings, paving the way for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of interspecies relationships.

This first observation revealed a dynamic between the different subjects aimed at reducing the risk of error or failure. These attitudes often manifested themselves in smiles and good-natured, sometimes playful behaviour, which helped to create an environment of greater emotional security. However, the emotional and relational changes that occurred during the experience were particularly significant.

Particularly after the activities with the horses were carried out, a change was observed in the way the participants interacted with each other, which shifted towards more emotional and mutually supportive methods. Emotions such as fear and embarrassment, which were initially difficult to accept, were later integrated and recognised as normal aspects of the emotional growth process. This aspect of integration was also evident on a physical

level. Initially, the participants were rather distant from each other. However, as the experience progressed, more open, emotionally involved methods of interaction characterised by greater spontaneity and closeness emerged.

From a psychological point of view, these transformations represent an element that allows us to understand the processes underlying personal change and the integration of emotions, promoting a better balance between the self and the other. The ability to recognise and accept emotions such as fear and embarrassment helps to develop a more integrated self-image and to be less dependent on excessive defence mechanisms that fragment identity and impair the ability to adapt professionally and socially.

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[*] Abstract

Questo articolo presenta i risultati preliminari di un progetto pilota, “Grit and Grace Horses” (USA) – *Impronte Equine* (Italia), che si sviluppa tra Stati Uniti e Italia e si concentra sulla relazione tra cavalli e personale militare. In particolare, il contributo analizza un workshop svoltosi presso il centro di formazione La Melagrana in provincia di Padova, dove l’interazione tra cavalli e soldati è stata osservata attraverso un approccio interdisciplinare che integra metodi di antropologia e di psicologia. L’obiettivo principale è di costruire le basi per proporre un paradigma innovativo finalizzato allo sviluppo di un modello teorico e pratico replicabile, utile per comprendere e affrontare sistemi di presa in carico della sofferenza e di incrementare la conoscenza sulle relazioni interspecie. L’obiettivo è quindi riflettere su come le interazioni tra umano e non-umano possono essere applicate in contesti di recupero, supporto psicologico e di benessere in generale.

Note

[1] Translation of the original text: Sottopone ad un ripensamento della griglia concettuale con cui per secoli la cultura occidentale ha filtrato il concetto di “noi”, il concetto di chi sono gli “altri” ed i nostri concetti sul genere umano. L’alterità, come viene considerata attualmente, risponde al bisogno umano di tracciare confini entro cui costruire un’epistemologia fissa che rappresenta, secondo l’autore, una pura illusione onto-epistemica (...). L’ontologia relazionale è il primo passo (...) per un ripensamento dell’umano non chiuso entro la sua identità, ma aperto alla continua costruzione delle soglie identitarie (Armano 2018).

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Linda Armano si occupa di antropologia estrattiva e business anthropology, concentrandosi su temi quali l'industrializzazione mineraria, le catene del valore, l'etica aziendale, la sostenibilità e gli studi indigeni. Le sue ricerche si sviluppano principalmente nei contesti canadese e italiano. Tra le sue indagini più recenti si annovera un'analisi antropologica delle diverse interpretazioni attribuite al concetto di eticità, lungo la filiera produttiva, in relazione alla certificazione dei diamanti estratti in Canada. Linda Armano è inoltre direttrice scientifica di *Secondary Extraction Association*, un network internazionale e interdisciplinare dedicato alla progettazione di realtà sociali, economiche e politiche che mirano a superare la logica estrattiva fondata sullo sfruttamento e sull'appropriazione di risorse materiali e intangibili.

Giuliana Marple è docente presso l'Università dello Utah, dove insegna anche esperienze di apprendimento assistito da cavalli. Marple è una specialista equina certificata PATH International in Salute Mentale e Apprendimento e apporta la sua esperienza professionale al suo lavoro accademico, esaminando la relazione terapeutica tra esseri umani e cavalli. È fondatrice di Grit & Grace Horses negli Stati Uniti e co-fondatrice del progetto Impronte Equine in Italia. Giuliana Marple è una ricercatrice ed educatrice che ha dedicato molti anni ad esplorare l'impatto che i cavalli hanno sul benessere umano e ha sviluppato approcci innovativi all'apprendimento assistito da cavalli che combinano conoscenze scientifiche con metodi di apprendimento esperienziale. Marple conduce workshop sia in Italia che negli Stati Uniti, portando l'apprendimento assistito da cavalli ad un pubblico internazionale.

Michele Marconi è co-fondatore del progetto Impronte Equine e uno psicologo, con oltre vent'anni di esperienza, in riabilitazione presso l'Ospedale S. Giuliana di Verona, dove lavora con giovani con disturbi di personalità. Nel progetto Impronte Equine il Dott. Michele Marconi promuove un processo che facilita la comunicazione non verbale e il riconoscimento delle emozioni. Questo approccio è anche parte integrante degli interventi riabilitativi svolti dal Dott. Marconi presso l'Ospedale S. Giuliana. Il Dott. Marconi ha sviluppato anche recenti studi (Marconi M., 2024, *Il cavallo e l'adolescente*, Erickson, Trento) che hanno dimostrato che gli interventi terapeutici con i cavalli migliorano significativamente il funzionamento socio-emotivo e promuovono la riabilitazione psicosociale.

