

# Drawings as a Methodical Access to Reconstruct Children's Perspective on a Horse-Assisted Intervention

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**Abstract**—In this article, the collection and analysis of drawings are implemented and discussed as a methodological approach to reconstruct children's perspective on horse-assisted interventions. For this purpose, drawings of three children (8-10 years old) were included in the research process in order to clarify the question of what insights can be derived from the drawings about the child's perspective on the intervention. The children were asked to draw a picture of themselves at the horse stable. Practical implementation considerations are disclosed. The developed analysis steps consider the work of two art historians (Erwin Panofsky and Max Imdahl) to capture the visual sense and to interpret the children's drawings. Relevant topics about the children's perspective can be inferred from the drawings. In the drawings, the following topics are important for the children: Overcoming challenges and fears in handling the horse, support from an adult in handling the horse and feeling self-confident and competent to act after completing tasks with the horse. The drawings show the main topics which are relevant for the children and can be used as a basis for conversation. All in all, the child's drawing offers a useful addition to other survey methods in order to gain further insights into the experiences of children in a horse-assisted setting.

**Keywords**—Children's perspective, interpret children's drawings, equine-assisted-intervention, methodical analysis.

## I. BACKGROUND

THE interpretation of children's drawings offers a methodical approach to detailed documentation and reconstruction of the child's perspective [1]. The inclusion of children's drawings in the research design offers advantages that are used when collecting and evaluating the data.

As part of a qualitative pilot study on the reconstruction of the child's perspective on a horse-assisted intervention [2], semi-structured interviews with children were used to develop an understanding of their relevance for the experience of the intervention. In addition to the interviews, each child was asked to make a drawing to enable an additional possibility to express their own perspective. The results from the evaluation of the child's drawings can be used to validate the results of the interviews. In the event of a large deviation in the results, interpretations of the interview would have to be reconsidered.

The creation of a drawing in the survey process uses the image as a mean of communication [3], so that the children are offered another means of expression. The drawing can be viewed as a warm-up phase [4], in which painting as a well-

known practice and self-evident expression [5] from the personal and educational area [6], facilitating the start of the conversation. The involvement of the child's active participation thus gives the child the feeling of being taken seriously at the beginning of the survey and thereby increases the motivation to engage in the conversation [4]. First of all, the picture is brought into the centre of attention and not the child. This can first approach the subject of the picture before asking about one's own involvement [7]. Furthermore, the drawing offers variety in the course of the interview [8], so that the children's attention is retained [4]. The picture is a memory-support created by the child itself [9] that serves as a guide in the conversation [10] and stimulates the communication [11]. The expression of painting offers a child-friendly [4], culturally universal [12] and non-verbal form of expression, which through its own action enables a different form of dealing with a topic, allowing new insights and making visible what cannot be put into words [13].

The new childhood research is repeatedly asked to involve children into the research process which can be implemented by using children's drawings as data [14]. Through the drawing, the children are involved in the research process [4] and since the child's representation is not a naturalistic rendition of what is seen, but rather the interpretation of the child [15, [16]. The picture can capture further dimensions of the object area and be related to the existing data [17]. Results from interviews or observations can be supported or questioned by the results of the images and, by incorporating a further methodological approach, offer a more in-depth analysis when processing the question. Therefore, the drawings are analyzed regarding interviews or statements of the children about the picture.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following two questions provide guidance for dealing with children's drawings:

- 1) Is the collection and evaluation of children's drawings suitable to reconstruct the children's perspective on horse-assisted interventions?
- 2) What knowledge about the children's perspective on horse-assisted interventions can be derived from the children's drawings?

In addition to findings on the topic, the inclusion of children's drawings as a research method is reflected. The perspective of the interviewed children is to be reconstructed using the drawings in order to generate new approaches to the

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mode of action of the intervention.

### III. PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

In order to get a meaningful picture, a suitable painting task was first worked on, which gives the child as much freedom as possible when working on the given topic. In order to grasp the perspective of the children and understand how they experience themselves in the context of the horse-assisted intervention, the children should paint themselves in this context. All children should be given the same painting task in order to achieve a certain degree of comparability. The painting task was: 'paint a picture of yourself at the stable'. Then the children sometimes ask what exactly they should paint. It will then be left to the child 'as you like'. Children rate their own pictures according to whether they are naturalistic. Therefore, an open task is useful to alleviate pressure to perform [18]. The children should feel comfortable and not feel that they have to master a task particularly well.

Since the material offered has an influence on the resulting image [19], considerations regarding general framework conditions must be considered before using children's drawings. All children should work with the same material in order to achieve a certain comparability. For most children, coloured pencils are material they know from their everyday life and they are familiar to it [20]. Difficulties in handling can be avoided. The coloured pencils also allow the drawing of small details, such as eyes or fingers, which could be important for the evaluation. All children get a white Din A4 sheet that they can paint according to the task.

To not influence the image, the researcher keeps out of the creation process as much as possible. The child independently decides when it thinks the picture is ready. After finishing the picture, the child is asked to explain exactly what was painted and whether s/he can tell a little more about the picture in order to avoid later misinterpretations [21]. No suggestive questions or interpretations may be brought up to the picture, since these are often taken over by the children without reflection [18].

### IV. INTERPRETATION OF A CHILD'S DRAWING

The literature on the interpretation of children's drawings reveals a flood of information that could be relevant for the evaluation. It describes which perception requirements for the graphic development exist [21], which phases (e.g. scribble phase, schema phase) follow each other [18], how you can recognize them [22] and how they relate to age-specific thinking and feeling [6] as well as explanations of colour interpretation (for a comparison of different authors [22], [23]). Furthermore, the children's drawing is described as a method in diagnostics [6], whereby e.g. an assessment of mental health [22] or intelligence can be made [24]. There is also a wealth of information about various possibilities in art therapy [21].

In order not to be confused by the many possibilities to approach a drawing, a concept is required that enables concentration on the content which is relevant for the research

question. It is therefore important to address the following question: What information is needed from the picture? In this way, a method can be used which makes it possible to make this information visible.

From the picture, the children's perspective on the horse-assisted intervention should be worked out, in order to check the interpretations from the interviews and to connect them with additional material. Thus, the focus is on what the child emphasizes in the drawing and how it presents itself. It is about the meaning of the image without diagnostic assessments playing a role.

Wopfner's study [25] is used for orientation when interpreting the drawings. In line with the interpretation of Panofsky [26], self-images of children in the transition to the youth phase are examined. Image interpretations according to Panofsky are based on the sociological research approach according to Mannheim [27]. This is the documentary method that enables access to reflective, theoretical and action-oriented knowledge. A change is made from the question of what the social reality is in the perspective of the actors to the question of how it is produced in practice [28]. The interpretation of images is carried out in two steps. The formulating interpretation picks up on what is discussed, while the reflective interpretation deals with how a topic is treated [29]. Here, the comparative analysis is of central importance, which is parallel to the grounded theory [28]. Today it is Bohnsack [30] who develops the connection between art historical analysis methods for social sciences.

Based on Panofsky [26] and Imdahl [31], the content of the image will be captured. Since the three analysis steps of the art historian Panofsky were developed for the interpretation of artistic images, some adjustments have to be made for the practical acquisition of the visual sense of children's drawings.

The first step of the analysis is the pre-iconographic analysis, with interpretations being left out. The formal description of the image is considered [26]. Transitions between the analysis steps can be fluid [32].

The iconographic analysis focuses on the interpretation of the image. The observation of the field lines according to Imdahl [31] is used as a first step to understand the children's drawings. By highlighting striking lines within the drawing, it can be shown which elements of the picture were placed into focus and makes clear what is relevant for the child. The structural composition of the image provides information about the meaning of the image. The field lines show which elements are important in the drawing, making it easier to approximate the visual sense. This approach based on Imdahl [31] was chosen because it is also used in the evaluation of images outside of art and enables the reconstruction of visual sense, such as with modern advertising images [33]. In the interpretation, the holistic interpretation is also considered, whereby individual segments are considered on their own and in connection with the overall composition [18], [32].

With the iconological analysis, the actual essence [26] of the picture is to be worked out. For the interpretation of historical works of art, information about the epoch that the picture was painted is necessary in order to place the work in a

larger context and to complete the interpretation. Since the era for children's drawings is of little relevance to the question, the results of the previous interview from the pilot study [2] are used to embed the drawing in a wider context and to enable a comprehensive interpretation.

The drawings are analysed in three steps. In the first step, what is shown in the picture is recorded descriptively. Subsequently, insights are made that also arise in connection with the child's oral description of the picture, so that misinterpretations are avoided [18]. For the interpretation the field lines are used [31] and the segments are analysed [32]. After it, the results of the interviews are linked back in order to support the interpretations made there or, if necessary, to question them again. It should be noted that the image analysis does not claim objective validity.

## V. THE INTERVENTION AND THE CHILDREN

The surveyed children had been participating in a riding project for about a year at the time of the survey. They spend two hours at a riding stable about one to four times a month. The project is offered by an open children's and youth institution, which supports children from families with little education or children who experience neglect. The surveyed children also have a refugee background. The pedagogue who offers the intervention is also a natural health professional and works with an older, calm warmblood. A similar procedure is usually followed in small groups consisting of up to five children. Together they groom the horse, while the pedagogue provides basic knowledge of the animal's behaviour, handling and riding. The children take turns riding and the individual children are attended to individually. The children are usually led and can e.g. do balance exercises on the horse. Exercises from the ground and communication with the horse are also included in the sessions.

Two girls (9 and 8 years old, images 1 and 2) and a boy (10 years old, image 3) were interviewed. The same children were interviewed for a pilot study in which the perspective of children on a horse-assisted intervention with interviews was raised [2].

## VI. RESULTS

In the following, the individual analysis steps for the respective drawings are discussed in detail in order to disclose the procedure for reconstructing the children's perspective.

### A. Image Evaluation of Children's Drawing 1

#### Description

In the drawing, the child has painted itself on the left and the horse on the right side, standing on a skin-coloured floor. In the top left corner of the picture is written in black letters 'I love riding'. Behind the lettering is a red heart with a black border, which is about the same size as the letters. On the right, directly below the lettering, there is a much larger heart without a border. The heart is directly under the word 'riding'. On the left, a little further below the lettering, a yellow star was painted. A yellow sun can be seen in the top right corner

of the picture. The girl painted herself with orange pants and a red top. The girl's right arm is pointing down, the left one is pointing up. The girl has medium-length, dark brown hair and a red mouth. The horse is dark brown and the tail is red. It is elongated, has short legs and is not very detailed.



Fig. 1 Child drawing 1

#### Interpretation

##### Field Lines

The creation of the field lines shows the middle division of the picture into an upper and a lower part. In the upper part there is the lettering 'I love riding' and other symbols and in the lower part the girl, the horse and the ground. This division of the picture could clarify the emotional world in relation to what is painted below. All other lines that run from the bottom left to the top right point to the girl. The lines, starting from the horse's back and from the big heart, put the girl in the centre. The line, starting from the girl's outstretched arm, also draws attention to her. A line runs from top left to bottom right between the girl and the horse. This line suggests a certain distance between girl and horse.

##### Segments

The first segment is a black lettering 'I love riding'. The lettering seems like a heading to emphasize the primary message of the picture. This segment is positioned in the top left so that it quickly comes into view like reading a book. It should be noted that the riding is mentioned by the child and not the horse in this lettering. This suggests that the connection to the animal is less important than the activity of made possible by the horse and the associated positive feelings. The verb 'love' also expresses a strong affinity for the activity of riding.

The second segment, a small heart, is located directly behind the lettering. It is outlined in black and painted in red. Due to the size and the black border in the same colour as the letters, it seems as if the heart would line up with the lettering and refer to it. The heart seems to underline the statement of the sentence.

The third segment is the yellow star, which makes it clear that there are symbols in the upper half of the picture because a single, big star would not be seen in the sky in reality. The

star could emphasize that the scene is something special.

The fourth segment, the large red heart in the upper centre of the picture, seems to refer to the lettering as it touches it. It is placed directly under the word 'riding' and seems to emphasize the passion for this activity.

The sun in the upper right corner of the picture could have a similar meaning to the star. It brings light and warmth and could stand for the positive experience with the horse.

The sixth segment shows how the girl painted herself in this drawing. The girl is in the foreground because she is drawn the frontmost position in the picture. Furthermore, the girl was painted waving, which attracts attention. This effect is reinforced because the left, outstretched hand is larger than the right. The girl also wears striking clothes, a red top and orange pants. The girl's face is painted very differentiated, so that eyebrows and eyelashes can also be seen. Mouth and cheeks were painted red, and could symbolize joy and movement, since you get red cheeks when you move. The girl stands on the floor in contrast to the horse; perhaps a hint that she feels safe and confident with the horse. The focus is on the girl, while the connection to the horse moves into the background. Nevertheless, the head is tilted towards the horse and the horse's back falls towards the girl, which could indicate a certain degree of attention. Another common characteristic between humans and animals is the identical hair and fur colour.

In contrast to the girl, the horse is static, which emphasizes the passive role of the animal from the girl's point of view. It is drawn with little details and hardly resembles a horse. The red tail is striking. The horse was drawn much smaller than the girl, which emphasizes the overriding role of the girl. In addition, the horse was drawn with a rather human face, which shows the humanization of the animal. It is striking that the animal is not standing on the ground but seems to hover just above it. Perhaps the girl expresses a floating feeling that she perceives while riding. The lack of contact with the ground can also symbolize insecurity [23], perhaps insecurity or fear of the horse.



Fig. 2 'Failed attempt' child 1

At this point, the girl's 'failed attempt' to paint the horse should also be considered. Before drawing the horse into the picture, the girl took out another sheet to practice drawing the horse. The question arises whether this attempt says more than 'That was a failed attempt'. Since the person and the symbols in the picture were drawn recognizably, it is surprising why this did not work for the horse. It looks like the girl has not really looked at what a horse looks like, which could be a lack of interest. The animal stands in the background compared to riding and its own needs.

The floor was identified as the eighth segment. A light floor underlines the lightness and positive mood that emanates from this picture. The floor also shows which segments the girl has brought to the fore.

#### *Description of the Child for the Picture*

I: Then tell me again very briefly what you have painted?

K: Mh this is \*meee\* (voice goes up)

I: Yes

K: I love riding, \*heart\* (voice goes up)

I: Because you probably love riding

K: Yes (.) And there is a sun, that is \*name of the horse\*

I: Mhm

K: Umm that's still a heart and a star

I: What does the star stand for?

K: Star? That's, for, that's, a five-star hotel

I: Mhm

K: Umm the heart is that I, um (.) \*like\* (voice goes up)

\*Name of the horse\* the heart there that I love riding

I: Mhm, and the sun?

K: (clears throat) the sun is for happiness

I: Happiness (.) And, ehm, why does \*name of the horse\* have a red tail?

K: Because he, um, I just wanted to do it that way, because he is also there because I want to do it so that he is also strong (.) as if he were a superhero \*laughs\*

The child's explanation coincides with the previous interpretations. In the description, the child begins with "that's me". This confirms the assumption that the child placed itself at the centre of the picture. The picture and the corresponding description of the girl reflect the feeling of being the focus and getting recognition for the performance while riding. The star in the picture can be interpreted in a similar way. According to the girl, the star stands for "five-star hotel", a term that stands for luxury, something special and time out. Riding is seen as a recreation where you feel special. This is also what the sun stands for, which according to the child symbolizes happiness. Another topic is the overriding role towards the horse. The horse was drawn smaller than the girl.

Next the girl goes into the lettering. Above all, the following statement confirms the interpretation of the picture that riding and the feeling that goes with it are in the foreground for the girl: "Umm the heart is that I, um (.) \*like\* (voice goes up) \*Name of the horse\* the heart there that I love riding". She likes the horse and loves riding. The immovably drawn horse is in a passive role and there is not necessarily an emotional connection to the animal.

The horse was painted with a red tail. Hereby the child wants to show "that he is also strong (.) as if he were a superhero". This statement allows some interpretations. Perhaps the horse is described as a kind of superhero with special strength to describe the diffuse feeling 'I feel better with the horse'.

The main theme of the picture is the increased self-esteem of the child through the horse-supported support.

### B. Image Evaluation of Children's Drawing 2

#### Description

In the upper half of the picture there is an arch in the form of a simple black line at the upper edge of the picture, which spans the lower half of the picture. At the bottom of the picture, a floor was painted with dark brown paint, on which further picture content is lined up. On the left are some black lines in a rectangular arrangement, which are supposed to describe a bank with a green bag next to it on the floor. To the right is a woman holding the girl on her left hand. The woman is wearing black boots, brown trousers and a blue top. The girl is wearing white shoes, blue trousers, a purple top and a yellow helmet. At some distance to the left of the girl is a small, brown horse with a small head that carries a black saddle.

#### Interpretation

##### Field Lines

By using the field lines, the viewer can see the main message of the picture. The lines emanating from the woman and the girl overlap and underline their connection, while the other objects and the horse stand for themselves. The lines emanating from the bench and the horse either point upwards without overlap, or point horizontally in the direction of the people, which brings them further into focus. The horse's neckline emphasizes a certain spatial distance. This could show that the girl's emotional connection to the woman is higher than that to the horse. A cluster of lines around the two people and their central positioning suggest that these connections play an important role for the girl.

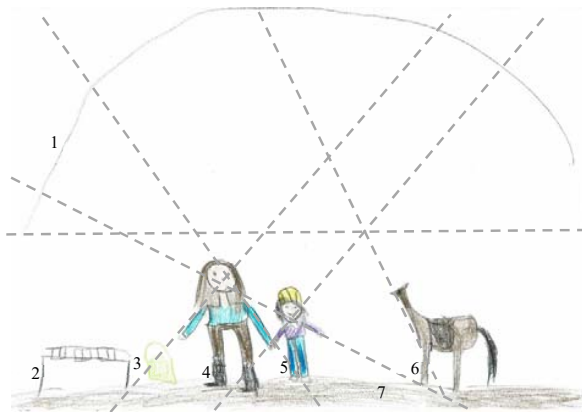


Fig. 3 Child drawing 2

#### Segments

In the upper half of the picture you can only see the arch spanning the scene. This segment can represent the roof of the riding arena or the stable. Since the scene is spanned, it could also represent the security that the child experiences in the context of the intervention and in the presence of the pedagogue. Similar symbols, which also stand for protection and security, are holding hands with an adult and the riding helmet.

The second segment is a bench. There is also a bench in the riding hall, on which the children can sit while they are not riding. The bench could represent topics such as rest or spending time with the group.

The third segment is a bag. The researcher had such a bag with her during the observations. Maybe the girl painted the bag to make it recognizable.

The girl identified the woman as the researcher. The woman wears black boots as it is customary in cavalry. She never wore riding boots for the observations. The boots show that the woman is seen by the girl as part of the equestrian world. Perhaps, with the right shoes, she also expresses a woman's expertise about horses. There is a person with more knowledge that you can orientate yourself to. The foot position of the woman is striking in contrast to the girl. The woman's feet have been painted sideways and offset, which indicates a certain stability of this person and exudes security. The legs of the woman were painted at a greater distance from each other, so that the impression arises that she is standing with wide legs and can therefore give more support and security. Furthermore, the girl's body is slightly inclined in the direction of the woman, which underlines the connection or a 'lean'.

The connection between the woman and the girl is expressed in holding hands. A certain similarity between the two can be seen above all from the same posture and the same facial expression. In addition, the colour blue can be found in both women's and girl's clothing.

The first thing you notice about the horse is its small size. The horse is so small that it is at eye level with the girl, so the horse moves into the background in this picture. The relatively small head of the horse also underlines this. Perhaps the similar size between child and horse is due to an idea of equality between humans and animals. The horse, like the people, is painted statically, with its legs on the ground. Perhaps the child is expressing that the horse is also safe. With the saddle on horseback, a reference to the joint activity with the horse is provided.

The last segment is the dark brown floor. The floor shows the woman's foot position, which indicates that this person is stable. The height and the dark colour of the floor convey a certain firmness of the surface, which also express safety.

#### Description of the Child for the Picture

I: (...) then tell me again (...) what you have painted there

K: (audible exhalation) I painted there (.) I painted pf the \*name of the horse\* there that (.) Umm \*you\* (voice goes up)

I: Mhm

K: And I (.) You hold my, my hand (.) And I, wear a yellow helmet

I: Mhm

K: You put your bag there (on the picture you can see a green bag, like the one the interviewer brought to the riding lesson 4 days earlier) (.) and I still have a brown, a black (.) one black bench made there (in the riding hall there is a bench on which the children sit when they are

not riding)

I: Ah that's the bench

K: Yes

I: Mhm (.) And this should be the riding arena? (the arch at the top of the picture)

K: Yes

I: \*Probably\* (quietly)

K: The stable

I: Mhm why did you paint me and not \*name of the pedagogue\*?

K: Yes, because I'm with you

I: Mhm (.) So you kind of painted the picture from Friday when I was with you

K: You said a picture for me, so, a picture for you

The girl first mentions the horse, the meaning of the horse therefore seems to be more important than the picture initially suggests. The security through the connection to an adult person is also visible in the descriptions "you hold my, my hand". In this case the researcher was painted, the results from the interview of the pilot study [2] show that the connection to the pedagogue is also experienced in a similar way. The interview showed the important role of the pedagogue, who is seen as a role model and gives the children security and self-confidence by enabling them to experience success.

The girl also mentions that she is wearing a yellow helmet. The subject of security plays a central role in the picture.

The bench on which the children sit while they are not riding is also painted. A connection to the community among the children could be established here.

The main theme of the picture is the connection of the girl to an adult person, who gives her security in the context of the horse-assisted intervention.

### C. Image Evaluation of Children's Drawing 3

#### Description

In the middle of the lower edge of the picture a horse was painted in its box on the left, and to the right is a stick figure with enlarged arms.

#### Interpretation

#### Field Lines

The field lines show that the child concentrates on a few, essential elements. The outline of the horse's box could indicate a distance between the child and the horse.

#### Segments

The first segment shows the horse in its box, which, in contrast to the boy, was painted. The lower part of the box was painted yellow and is supposed to represent the straw on which the horse is standing. The colours draw the attention to the horse. It is striking that the straw in the box not only forms a narrow bottom line, but also extends to the horse's belly. The straw provides the horse warmth and food, which suggests that the wellbeing of the horse is important to the child. The animal stands a little higher than the child through the straw while the horse is not facing the child. In addition, the line of the horse box between child and horse is drawn two times.

This extra barrier between horse and child could refer to fear of the horse. On the other hand, the head of the horse was not shown from the side but from the front, which can be seen from the two eyes, which are both visible to the person viewing the picture. This, in turn, suggests sensitivity to the horse. In this drawing, the size ratio is somewhat closer to nature than in the other pictures, but the horse was painted slightly smaller than the boy, which is not particularly noticeable due to the difference in height.

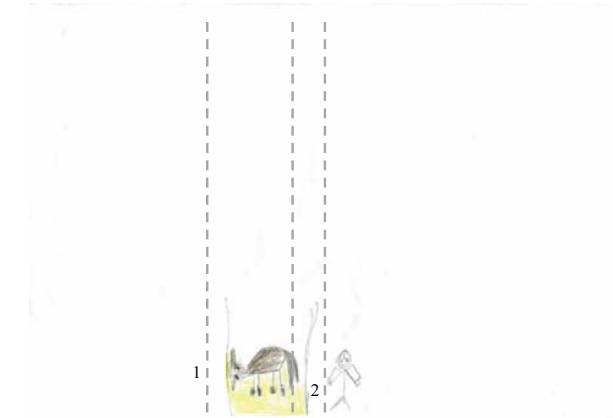


Fig. 4 Child drawing 3

The boy painted himself with very few details. For example, the stick figure has no colour, just two hairs and no feet. The face and hands were drawn with little accuracy. This shows the great importance of the animal in contrast to its own person. The boy's arms are highlighted by their size and could show that the boy feels strong in handling the horse. The child did not draw a floor line in the drawing. The horse stands on the straw while the boy hovers just above the leaf margin. The child may still feel insecure when handling the horse. A reserved attitude of the child can also be inferred from the little used space of the paper. The animal is locked up while the child can move freely. Here the dependency of the animal and the superiority of the human become clear.

#### Description of the Child for the Picture

I: Yes (.) Ehm can you briefly tell what you painted there?

K: I painted \*name of the horse\*, the horse of \*name of the pedagogue\*

I: Mhm

K: I painted myself (.) I actually like very much \*name of the horse\*

I: Mhm K: Heee (.) well he's just clever (.) and sch .. yes (.) That's why I painted him because I like him

I: Mhm

K: And that is why

I: And what are you doing in the picture?

K: I (.) me, I am with \*name of the pedagogue\*, and (.) I do, I do for, get him the horse out (.) And then clean him, we put a saddle on him, and we ride \*on him\* (quietly)

In the description, the child mentions the horse first.

Furthermore, positive characteristics of the horse are described, which underlines the affection for it. Even if the pedagogue was not drawn, the description of the child shows that the horse naturally belongs to the pedagogue. The pedagogue creates a security and the child does not need to be afraid of the horse. Maybe that's why the horse was drawn standing in the box so there is no danger. The description shows that the child feels active and confident when dealing with the horse. The fear of the animal has been overcome and now it can help other children in dealing with the horse. The horse is led out of the box in the description of the child, although there is a certain fear of the animal. The arms highlighted in the picture can therefore be understood as a visual metaphor [21] for self-confidence and self-efficacy.

The main message of the picture is that for the boy the focus is on the horse, although there is a certain fear of the animal that must be overcome.

## VII. LIMITATIONS

Since only three drawings were analysed, the results cannot be generalized. The drawings only allow a limited view of the topic, since fewer insights could be derived from the drawing than from the interviews. The pictures can be used to validate the results of the interviews. For a detailed description of a phenomenon, the use of children's drawings as a support material is recommended, since misinterpretations using only the drawing can occur. It should also be noted that the collection and evaluation of children's drawings is time-consuming and contains less information than interviews. It could be observed that the children feel pressured by making a drawing. For example, they explain that they cannot draw well and criticize their own drawing. It remains to be weighed whether the inclusion of drawings is worthwhile for the end result. On the one hand, the picture offers the children a further possibility of expression, while on the other hand creating the picture can be stressful. In addition, painting could be considered as childish by older children [34].

## VIII. DISCUSSION

In the present study, children's drawings were used as a methodical approach to the children's perspective on horse-assisted interventions. This was used to test whether this methodological approach makes sense in order to gather new knowledge about the child's perspective on horse-assisted interventions.

The three analysed drawings highlight the relevant topics to the children in relation to the intervention. For child 1, it is particularly important that it is the focus when riding. In the drawing, child 2 focuses on the connection to an adult who provides security. The third picture shows how to overcome fear when dealing with the horse.

The results from the image interpretation are similar to the results from the associated pilot study using interviews [2].

In the interviews, all children report an initial fear of the horse, which can reappear in certain situations [2]. In the interpretation of Fig. 4, the child's fear of the horse becomes

clear and overcoming fear also plays a role. The horse was painted standing safely in the box, while the child painted himself with strong upper arms. Furthermore, the pedagogue is described in the interviews by all children as support for the tasks with the horse [2]. Fig. 3 emphasized the orientation towards an adult person in the context of horse-assisted interventions. The child has placed itself and the adult, whose hand the child is holding on the drawing, in the centre of the drawing, while the horse is painted on the edge of the picture.

In the interviews, the children describe themselves as confident and competent to deal with tasks and challenges with the horse [2]. This is also how child 1 presents itself in the drawing. Waving and surrounded by hearts and stars, the child has painted itself in the centre of the picture, while the horse appears small and only on the edge of the picture.

It is striking that no child has painted itself sitting on the horse. This makes clear that not only riding, but also handling the horse is important for the children.

The feeling of increased self-confidence and self-efficacy, which becomes clear in drawing 3, is described in existing studies, which use the children's perspective as a methodical approach to investigate horse-assisted interventions [35]-[37].

Fig. 3 refers to a research gap in the field of animal-assisted interventions. In the picture the special meaning of the relationship with the pedagogue is taken up, which stands for safety in the picture. The importance of pedagogues and therapists in animal-assisted settings has so far hardly been researched, although they are important in shaping the intervention [38].

The methodological approach of using children's drawing to reconstruct their perspective is a useful tool to validate the results of the interviews in the pilot study on the same topic [2]. The pictures offer reassurance for the adequacy of the presentation of the relevance of the children and the main topics generated from the pilot study. Both survey instruments come to similar results, with the interviews providing more extensive information on the topic. In order to research the perspective of children, such drawings should not be used as the only survey method. The children's descriptions on the drawing prevent misinterpretations. A drawing can also be used in the research process without being analysed. This method can be used as a basis for discussion or as an orientation during the conversation. Children's drawings can also be used in horse-assisted practice to get into conversation with the child and to gain an insight into the experience of the intervention from a child's perspective.

All in all, it can be said that children's drawings as a research methodological approach to the children's perspective offer a useful addition to other survey methods in order to gain further insights into the experience of children.

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