



# AAI TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

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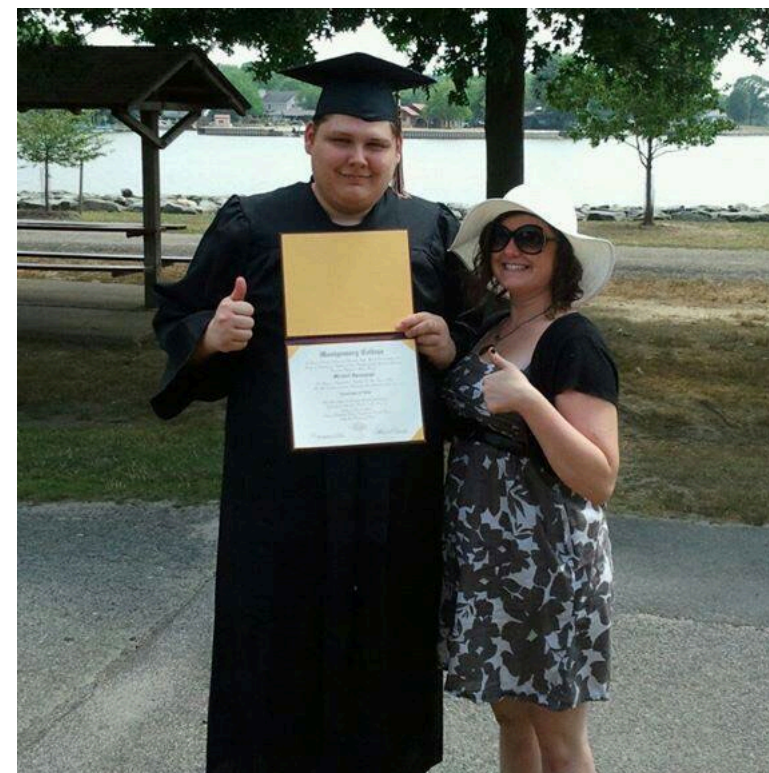
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

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# TIFFANY BANKS, MSW, LCSW, ABD

- Social Worker since 2009
- Working in the disability field since 2007
- Sibling, advocate, and ally
- PhD Candidate, Colorado State University



# THE WHY

- Increasing identification rates of ASD in the U.S.
- Financial impacts of ASD, growing each year
- Higher rates of psychiatric needs than compared to neurotypical peers
- Research on treatment options is controlled by able-bodied majority
- Animal-assisted Interventions (AAI) are showing promising outcomes but is not widely accessible

# METHODS

## Key Words

Autis\* OR asperger OR “pervasive developmental disorder”

AND

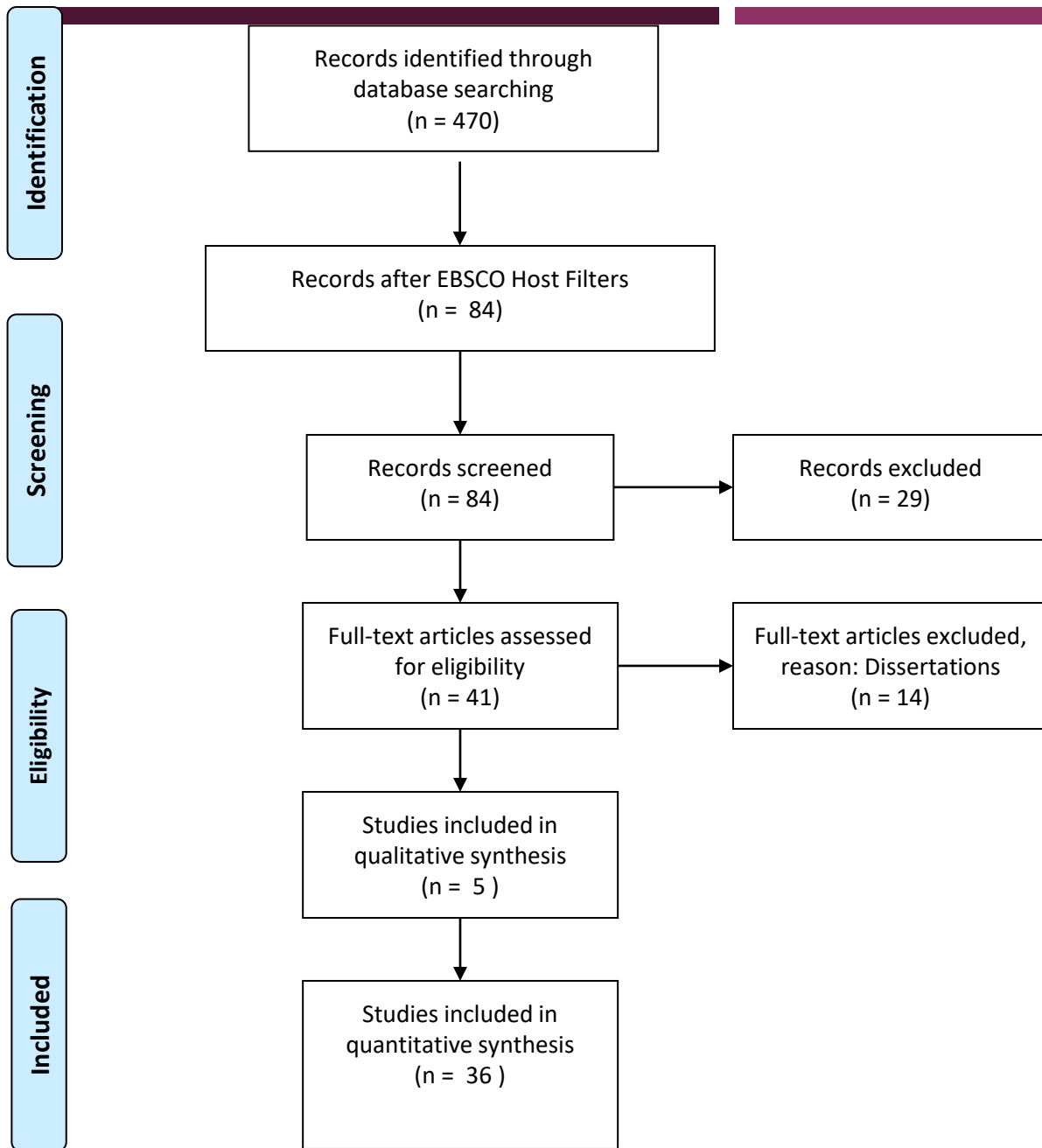
“animal assisted” OR “assistance dogs” OR “canine assisted” OR “dolphin assisted” OR “equine assisted” OR hippotherapy OR “horseback riding” OR “pet facilitated” OR “service dog” OR “therapeutic animal” OR “therapeutic horseback” OR “therapy with animals”

## Databases Utilized

Academic Search Premier ,APA PsychArticles ,APA PsychInfo , ERIC, Family and Society Studies Worldwide, Social Work Abstracts, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Primary Search, MED LINE

## Inclusion Criteria

Empirical Studies, Published between 2010-2021, Available in English

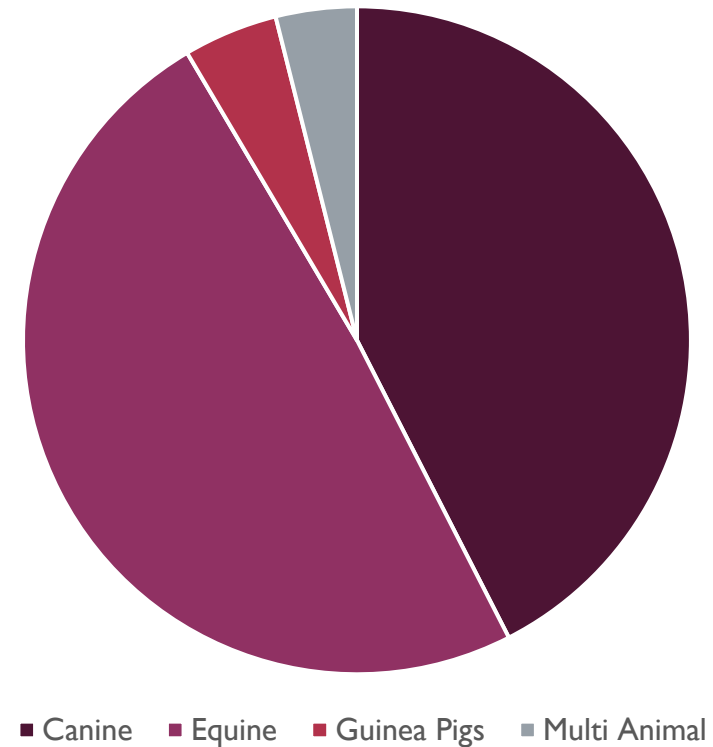


Exclusion Criteria	Number of Articles
Non ASD	15
Service Dogs	5
Pets	4
Robotic Animals Only	2
Non HAI	2
Non Empirical	1

# FINDINGS

- Sample sizes have doubled in the last 10 years
- Increases in research study rigor
- 6 studies had inconclusive results

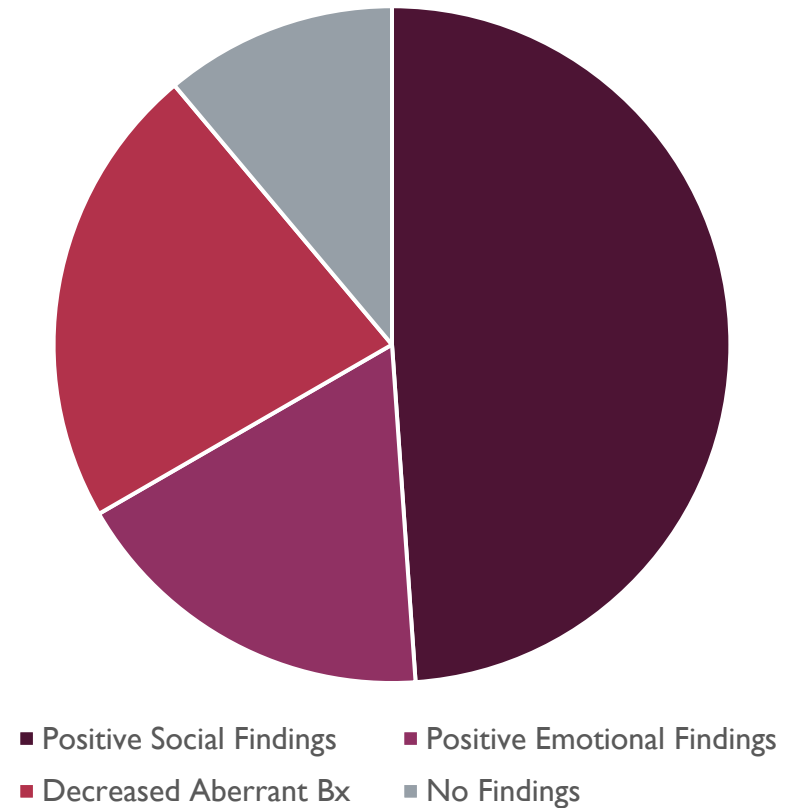
Number of Studies Utilizing Animal Species



# THREE AREAS OF FINDINGS

- Social
- Behavioral
- Emotional

Outcomes of Study



# SOCIAL OUTCOMES

- Identified in 26 studies of the sample
- AAA and AAT both showed positive social impacts
- Several areas of social interaction explored
  - Theory of Mind
  - Verbal Communication
  - Non-verbal Communication



# BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

- Identified in 15 studies within this sample
- Decreases in irritability, hyperactivity, and other restricted and repetitive behaviors
- Increases in executive functioning and activities of daily living
- Protopopova (2019) – How the canine engages in treatment impacts the outcome

# EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

- Only found in 9 of the studies
- Difficult to assess internal experiences of individuals with ASD using standardized measures
- School based programs may increase positive feelings associated with attendance
- Physiological measures gaining momentum

# STANDALONE VERSUS COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT MODELS

- Use of ASD best practices may increase the effectiveness of known treatment models
  - Social Stories
  - Social Skills Curriculum
  - Dance and Movement Therapy



**“Autistic people should  
have the ultimate say  
in what autism services  
focus on”**

*-The Autistic Self Advocacy Network*

## LIMITATIONS/GAPS

- Individuals with level 3 ASD typically left out of samples
- Absence of autistic voice throughout the literature
- The why and how are still unknown



THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

QUESTIONS?

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