5-2023

An Evaluation of U.S. Horseback Riding Instruction Certifications: Availability, Acquisition, Barriers, and Industry Need

Makenna L. Osborne
Utah State University

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AN EVALUATION OF U.S. HORSEBACK RIDING INSTRUCTION CERTIFICATIONS: AVAILABILITY, ACQUISITION, BARRIERS, AND INDUSTRY NEED

by

Makenna L. Osborne

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In

Agricultural Extension and Education

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2023
ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of U.S. Horseback Riding Instruction Certifications: Availability, Acquisition, Barriers, and Industry Need

by

Makenna L. Osborne, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Brian K. Warnick, Ph.D.
Department: Applied Sciences, Technology, and Education

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to analyze the U.S. equine industry’s availability of riding instruction certification options, describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of horseback riding instructors in the U.S., and explore the expectations that consumers have of instructors and instructor selection criteria. Four research objectives related to instruction were addressed: identifying the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S., describing the attitudes towards certification in the U.S., and describing the self-perception of currently certified and noncertified riding instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency, and identifying and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction certification in the U.S. Two objectives related to the consumer were addressed: collecting information on the
average riding lesson demographic in the U.S. and describing the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding instructors in the U.S. Two surveys were developed and sent out to instructors and consumers aligned with the research objectives designed to collect information on instructors’ self-perception of self-efficacy after certification, their perceived barriers to receiving certification, and consumers’ selection criteria for instructors. Satisfaction with certification on this scale had a mean score of 5.17 (SD = 0.94) on a 5-point scale, meaning that the average certified instructor was extremely satisfied with their decision to pursue certification and achieve certification. Perception of improvement of self-efficacy on this scale had a mean score of 3.65 (SD = 0.107) on a 5-point scale, meaning that the average certified instructor believed very strongly that the process of receiving a certification improved their self-efficacy. The top three barriers perceived by instructors to obtaining certification were the expense, time, and geographic inaccessibility to workshops. Consumers seek instructors with high levels of horsemanship skills and soft skills, as well as competition experience in specific disciplines. The horseback riding industry in the U.S. needs a clearly defined, reliable, and valid standard. A governing body or advocacy group for horseback riding instructors could fill this need.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of U.S. Horseback Riding Instruction Certifications: Availability, Acquisition, Barriers, and Industry Need

Makenna L. Osborne

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to analyze the U.S. equine industry’s availability of riding instruction certification options, describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of horseback riding instructors in the U.S., and explore the expectations that consumers have of instructors and instructor selection criteria. Two surveys were developed and sent out to instructors and consumers aligned with the research objectives designed to collect information on instructors’ self-perception of self-efficacy after certifying their perceived barriers to receiving certification, and consumers’ selection criteria for instructors. The average certified instructor was extremely satisfied with their decision to pursue certification and achieve certification, and the perception of improvement of self-efficacy for the average certified instructor showed that the respondent believed very strongly that the process of receiving a certification improved their self-efficacy. The top three barriers perceived by instructors to obtaining certification were the expense, time, and geographic inaccessibility to workshops. Consumers seek instructors with high levels of horsemanship skills and soft skills, as well as competition experience in specific disciplines, with certification being the fifth most important out of seven characteristics. The results of this study will help professional organizations, third-party stakeholders, and post-secondary education in the
development of programming aimed toward certification acquisition for professional riding instruction.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have supported me through my thesis and education journey that I would like to acknowledge. I would first like to thank my committee. Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Brian Warnick, for taking on a project in a field you were unfamiliar with, and a project that changed a lot from the original proposal due to circumstances out of my control. Thank you for your willingness to let me take lead on this.

A huge thank you to my undergraduate mentor, Dr. Karl Hoopes. I would not be completing this master’s without you, and if it were not for a few trail rides back in 2018 I definitely would not be here. You have helped me succeed and grow in ways I would not have imagined. Thank you for letting me stick around all these years and always inviting me to present at a conference or submit an abstract. My passion for sharing research comes from you.

Another thank you to Judy Smith, who taught me so much more about equitation science and relationships than I imagined, and who also guided me from a fledgling instructor to one who was confident and competent enough to take flight on my own. I would not have done this study without your enthusiasm and support!

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Lacee Boschetto for her help in developing the survey instruments, something I was totally unfamiliar with. Thanks to the soon-to-be Dr. Kelli Munns, you have elevated my perspective on the equine industry’s gaps and educational programming. My horsemanship, and more importantly, my educational skills have been elevated because of you.
Finally, I want to thank my family and friends who have supported me through the graduate school journey. Thank you all for teaching me and guiding me in and out of the arena. To my parents, Jon and Rosemary, who always believed in my ability to achieve higher education and supported me from the get-go. To Scott Christensen, a beloved friend and mentor who taught me more about life than horses, perhaps without meaning to. Thank you to all the Osbornes in Cache Valley who took care of me while I learned how to be away from home.

A thank you to Emmy for always carrying me into the mountains for a welcome break from school and work and teaching me more about myself than probably anyone or anything else ever has.

A final special thanks to my cornerstone, Ben. I could not have made it through this master’s degree and thesis without your support, patience, and love. Thank you for supporting my insane schedule, big dreams, desire to learn and do more, and so much more. I am so excited to be yours beyond ‘till death do us part.

Makenna L. Osborne
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

Professionals working as estheticians, accountants, and athletic trainers work in vastly different environments and perform widely different responsibilities. However, these professions do carry important similarities such as handling sensitive client information and playing a role in the responsible practice of what could otherwise be a dangerous or harmful outcome. In the state of Utah—and almost every state in the U.S.—it is required for these professionals to be licensed to perform their occupations. However, horseback riding instructors are not required to be licensed or certified to practice horseback riding instruction. This dissonance is alarming since an unqualified riding instructor can cause far worse outcomes than a haircut gone wrong (Thompson et al., 2015). Given the inherent risk of equine interactions and the size of the equine industry in the U.S., it is fascinating that there is no mandated, or even recommended, certification or licensure program for those involved in the industry. This changes from intrigue to alarm when one realizes the size of the equine industry. According to a 2017 Economic Impact report by the American Horse Council, the recreational sector of the equine industry promotes 162,000 direct jobs and adds $7.5 billion in direct value to the national economy. This is one of four sectors mentioned in the report, with an industry total of almost $37 billion dollars per year added to the national economy (AHCF, 2017). A qualified instructor has the potential to provide a foundation for safe and mutually-
beneficial interactions between horses and humans. So why is there not a higher standard for the education of horseback riding instructors?

In the U.S., there is no legal responsibility to hold a certification required to teach horseback riding. There are a variety of horseback riding instruction certifications available through third-party organizations, though there is no governing body to oversee accreditation and quality assessment of horseback riding instruction in the U.S. Out of 679 equestrians surveyed in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, 81% of equestrians studied had experienced at least one riding injury in their lifetime requiring medical care (Mayberry et al., 2007). Currently, Massachusetts is the only state that requires riding instructor certification to charge for services, and Maryland requires licensing of riding stables that solicit to the public with more than one horse in order to charge for services (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2021; Maryland Department of Agriculture, 2013).

With the exception of Massachusetts and Maryland, anyone in the U.S. with a horse can hang a sign up in their front yard and offer riding instruction in exchange for payment with no third-party accreditation or state licensure processes. Canada is one of the countries that require riding instructor certification, and in a study performed in British Columbia from 1991-1996, 1,950 citizens were hospitalized due to horse-related injuries (Sorli, 2000). An estimated 102,904 persons with non-fatal horse-related injuries (35.7 per 100,000 population) were treated in American emergency departments each year from 2001 to 2003 (Thomas, et al., 2006). Considering British Columbia’s population in the 1990s and the U.S. population in the early 2000s, that means that there was roughly an 8% higher rate of injury in the U.S. among the population. Proper
instruction is a primary preventive measure to reduce injuries. Studies have shown that elevated levels of self-efficacy correlate with better safety attitudes (Grau et al., 2002). Meaning, perceptions of self-efficacy have direct cognitive links to behaviors, and it is conceptualized as a personality construct, a general belief in one’s ability to succeed. It would be interesting to explore whether instructor certification and level of self-efficacy would improve safety rates in horseback riding lessons. According to the literature, injuries caused by horses have the highest likelihood of requiring hospitalization in U.S. emergency departments among 250 recreational activities monitored. The equestrian injury admission rate to a hospital is 16.6% higher than the next activity of riding all-terrain vehicles (ATV)/motorcycles at 12.0% (U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2014). Given that horseback riding has such inherent danger, it is remarkable that there is no state or federal licensing process required for horseback riding instruction in the U.S., apart from Maryland and Massachusetts.

Most reported data regarding equestrian-related injuries come from isolated case reports and retrospective studies. The anecdotal nature of the data reflects the decentralized manner in which equestrian sports are practiced. Three of the largest equine breed and equestrian sports associations in the U.S. with high rates of membership, the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), the U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF), and the Federation Equestrian Internationale (FEI), collect robust injury statistics. There are no legislative requirements to report equestrian head injuries, as there have been in other popular U.S. sports. Several studies have shown that up to 64% of injured riders said they could have prevented the injury and that the injuries were due to handler/rider
error or mismanagement (Ball, et al., 2007; Ekberg, et al., 2011; Newton & Nielson, 2005). Statistically, this means that six out of ten equestrian injuries could have been prevented. This high percentage is unlikely to change without further interventions, such as safety training and the sharing of ideas or experiences to be safer around horses (Chapman, et al., 2020). One such intervention that would benefit both the equestrian and the equine would be instruction from a qualified instructor to produce successful and safe outcomes (Jones & Bishop, 2011; Makhtar et al., 2018; Ruttenberg et al., 2020). In a 2015 Purdue University survey, 1,007 American horse competition industry participants were asked what their preferred source of information about the care and health of horses. The top three preferred sources of information regarding horse health and care included veterinarians (91%), farriers (77%), and trainers (68%) (Lofgren et al., 2015). This shows that instructors, or trainers, have significant influence on the actions of their clients and students, and should be qualified to disseminate accurate information.

While there are arguments that education and training don’t work to improve safety, there is a multitude of studies that conclude that good quality and relevant training delivered in a controlled exposure to environmental variables could improve safety skills enabling instructors to apply more control over hazardous situations (Waran, et al., 2007). How can one ensure that instructors are trained in welfare-based handling practices as well as competent riding skills? Competency in riding technique that has been tested to outside standards may increase the likelihood of an instructor being able to effectively predict equine behaviors that would lead to accident or injury.
Statement of the Problem

Although sports involving animals are arguably some of the most traditional, interspecies sports have until very recently been neglected as a specific genre of sports studies (Thompson & Nesci, 2013). A search of current journals will find a variety of articles on athletic training, scuba diving, skydiving, and other types of inherently risky sports certifications, but there is a dearth in the literature on equine sports certifications. Horses have historically been beasts of burden but recently have transitioned to athletes and partners in the human world. As the world of horse and human interaction continues to develop, there has been significant progress in the understanding of equine cognitive abilities, the benefits that horses have to human health and welfare, and much progress in the field of equitation science. Minimal, if any, literature exists right now that defines professional certifications for riding instructors in the U.S. There is little information available on riding instruction, equestrian coaching, and qualifications of riding instructors. Literature from 1946 included this observation, and there remains to be a lack of research since (Spence, 1946). There is no peer-reviewed knowledge about the association between professional equine riding instruction certifications and the promotion of equine sports injury prevention through professional education. Many respondents in some studies believed that with education and good knowledge of horse behavior, most equine-related injuries could be prevented (Chitnavis et al., 1996; Ingemarson et al., 1989). There is also a significant gap in the literature that defines the competencies required for efficacious horseback riding instructors. The U.S. Parachute Association (USPA) mandates instructor certification and training for skydiving
instructors (USPA, 2021), another extreme sport with inherent risk comparable to equestrian sports. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors requires multiple levels of certification that are competency-based before an instructor is ever allowed to take a diver under the water (PADI Instructor Development Course, 2021). With equestrians making up a larger portion of emergency room visits than skydiving, scuba diving, and other extreme sports combined, it is interesting that instructors are not held to a higher standard as there is no certification or licensure mandate for riding instructors in the U.S.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the U.S. equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and the relationship that professional certification has with the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the U.S. Information from a qualified source, such as an instructor or coach, has been determined to help prevent equine-related injuries, whether on the ground or in the saddle. Instructors typically have more experience than students in their discipline or field of equestrianism, and that translates to the know-how of preventative procedures. Instructors also provide an outside glimpse into the rider-horse dyad and can assist riders in troubleshooting issues with communication that may lead to accidents or injury. However, due to the lack of quantitative and qualitative research on the qualifications necessary to become a riding instructor in the U.S., the positive or negative effects of horseback riding instruction certification or licensure have yet to be thoroughly analyzed. The purpose of this study is
to analyze the U.S. equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the U.S.

Objectives of the Study

Six research objectives have been designed to guide this study in the evaluation of horseback riding instruction certification acquisition as well as the examination of certified and noncertified riding instructors’ self-efficacy:

- **RO 1:** Identify the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S.
- **RO 2:** Describe the attitudes towards certification in the US.
- **RO 3:** Describe the self-perception of currently certified and non-certified riding instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency.
- **RO 4:** Identify and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction certification in the U.S.
- **RO 5:** Collect information on the average riding lesson demographic in the US.
- **RO 6:** Describe the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding instructors in the U.S.

Limitations of the Study

Given the lack of national oversight in the horseback riding instruction industry, the certifications available in the U.S. vary in acquisition method, which makes comparison difficult. Comparison and evaluation of available certifications in this study
will be focused on competency-based certifications, excluding several instructor certification options. Not every competency-based certification has the same qualification process. There is no national standard for instruction certification or evaluation, but there are five skill-based (workshop) and examination-based third-party certifying organizations that are available nationwide. These are the five organizations that will be reviewed, as these organizations have similar processes and outcomes.

The U.S. has no riding instructor oversight or published expectation of riding instructor competencies. Given this, this study will have to create an expectation for riding instructors based on the interviews of industry stakeholders, such as breed association stakeholders, riding discipline association stakeholders, colleges and universities that have riding instructor programs, and others. These opinions may vary and may not be representative of the equine industry as a whole.

With no official database available, all riding instructors included in this study were contacted via certifying organizations or social media, limiting the possibility of getting responses from riding instructors who are not certified.

**Significance of the Study**

Developing a comparison and contrast of available riding instructor certifications is the beginning to substantiate and validate riding instruction certification competencies. An understanding of the competencies and qualifications required to obtain riding instructor certifications will allow for the exploration of barriers to acquiring professional certification, as well as the instructor’s self-efficacy related directly to certification
competencies and the acquisition process. Professional licensing will protect the safety interests of the public and enhance commerce through standardized expectations of instructor education. While licensing is a huge leap for the equine sports instruction industry, understanding certification competency is a step in the right direction for the prevention of injuries and to safely promote equestrian sports.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The purpose of this study was to analyze the U.S. equine industry’s availability of
riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between
professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the U.S. The
following six research objectives guided this study.

RO 1: Identify the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based
horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party
certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S.

RO 2: Describe the attitudes towards certification in the US.

RO 3: Describe the self-perception of currently certified and non-certified riding
instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency.

RO 4: Identify and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction
certification in the US.

RO 5: Collect information on the average riding lesson demographic in the US.

RO 6: Describe the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding
instructors in the US.

Historical Literature

Minimal literature exists currently that defines professional certifications for
riding instructors in the U.S. A comprehensive search was completed through the Journal
of Extension, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and Web of Science databases using the
following keywords: riding instructor, horseback riding instructor, horseback riding,
riding lessons, riding certification, horseback riding certification, horseback riding coach, riding coach, consumer preferences riding lessons, and riding lesson preferences. One article published in 1946 observed that there is little information available on riding instruction, equestrian coaching, and qualifications of riding instructors (Spence, 1946). Three studies were found that described the relationship between collaboration in horseback riding instruction and the novel approach of horseback riding lessons in the education industry (Garbett, 2011, 2014; Lundesjö Kvart et al., 2011). A study published in 2020 examined Scandinavian consumer preferences for riding lessons. The study’s main conclusion was that the most important attribute for Latvian, Swedish, and Finnish riders in selecting riding lessons was a qualified teacher, as it affected consumer willingness to pay the most (Tienharra et al., 2020). A myriad of studies was found that addressed the inherent risk of riding lessons, how instructors may affect safety outcomes in riding lessons, and the risk analysis of participating in riding lessons (Chapman et al. 2020; Chitnavis et al. 1996; Ekberg et al., 2011). However, no literature can be found looking into riding instructor certification, the relationship certification may have to instructor self-efficacy or barriers to certification for horseback riding instructors.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that guided this study is the CIPP evaluation model developed by Stufflebeam (1983). The CIPP evaluation model utilizes four types of evaluation, context, input, process, and product, to provide context for decision-making strategies. As shown in Figure 1, decisions can be made be evaluating four areas of a
program: the goals and mission (Context Evaluation); plans and resources (Input Evaluation); activities and components (Process Evaluation); and the outcomes and results (Product Evaluation). This model was used to identify themes in the currently available professional riding instruction certification programs and to construct the survey to determine the equine industry’s expectations of professional instructors.

**Figure 1**

*Context-Input-Process-Product Evaluation Model*

By understanding each of the four components of the CIPP model, programs can be better understood and areas that need improvement can be identified. While this research study did not focus on how third-party certifying organizations can improve, it did concentrate on how current instructors are utilizing third-party certifying organizations. This will allow for further studies that may analyze the benefit of specific organizations’ certifications, and governmental licensure for horseback riding instructors either based on third-party organizations’ learning outcomes or as a joint effort with these organizations and legislature, as well as evaluating the industry of creating horseback
riding instructors better. CIPP allows evaluators to understand the impact and sustainability of programs. Now that context has been addressed, the input must be received. Researching third-party organizations’ certification processes and requirements have collected input. The process is addressed through surveying instructors and consumers, and the process allows products to be developed. Specifically, this project explored the attitudes toward certification and the value that instructors and consumers put on certification.

**History of Professional Certifications and Licensure**

Professional certification is a designation earned by a person to assure that they have performed a task according to a standard. Guilds that rule crafting and trades have existed since the Middle Ages and are often viewed as institutions that guaranteed quality, though were also sometimes subject to manipulating markets and obstructing advancements. Many European guilds were turned into associations after the fall of most guilds in Britain in the mid-19th century (Ogilvie, 2021). However, some professional guilds still exist for professions in medicine, law, engineering, and higher education. Modern certifications use post-nominal letters to recognize accomplishment or general qualification (e.g., PhD, DVM, etc.). Industries in the U.S. that currently require professional certification or licensure also include, but are not limited to, aviation, computer technology, hospitality, marketing, ministering, public relations, real estate, and security. Without certification or licensure, professionals in many fields are either unemployable or seen as unsafe to work with (Laduca, 1994).
Review of Riding Instructor Certification Programs

Overseas, one must complete a rigorous certification process to complete riding instruction accreditation in order to offer horseback riding instruction services legally, professionals are often referred to as “instructors,” “coaches,” and “trainers.” In this context, an instructor, coach, or trainer is considered a person whose primary role is one of instructing proper horseback riding technique and equestrian safety principles, providing an effective and safe equine experience for their recreational or competitive client. Trainer and instructor licenses are obtained from the German Agriculture Ministry upon completion of vigorous study courses and riding tests (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung, n.d.). The Deutsche Reitliche Vereinigung is the national Equestrian Federation responsible for governing all disciplines of equestrian sports, breeding, and competitions in Germany. In North America, Canada has the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), which is a competency-based coach training and licensure program (Equestrian Canada, n.d.) required for all who teach riding instruction in Canada. In the U.S., there is no federal agency that governs horseback riding instruction licensing. There are a variety of discipline-specific, breed-specific, or equine advocacy organizations in the U.S. that typically are the voice for the equine industry in regard to policy-making and equestrian competition in America. Examples of the largest of these centralized organizations include the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and the U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF). The AQHA promotes primarily Western-style riding with 221,251 members in 2019, while the USEF promotes primarily English-style riding with 190,416 members in 2019 (American Quarter Horse
Association, 2020; U.S. Equestrian Federation, 2021). While these organizations promote equine-related policies and are a source of information for many horse owners and riders, they do not offer comprehensive instructor certifications for both Western and English-style riding for competitive and recreational riders (Sullivan, 2008). In 2017, 85% of horses in America were determined to be used for recreational purposes, so this is an important horse-owner and rider category to consider outside of competitive registries (American Horse Council Foundation [AHCF], 2017). While the competitive sector of the equine industry has plenty of instructors and coaches, the recreational portion likely has even more influence over the industry’s perceptions and is important to include in riding instruction certification metrics.

The five largest comprehensive third-party riding instruction certification organizations in the U.S., by membership, for both competitive and recreational riders, are as follows.

- Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) with 3,703 certified professionals in 2020.
- U.S. Dressage Federation (USDF) with about 3,775 certified professionals in 2021.
- American Riding Instructors Association (ARIA) with about 2,000 certified professionals in 2020.
- Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA) with 1,558 certified professionals in 2020.
- U.S. Eventing Association (USEA) with about 300 certified professionals in 2021.

See Table 1 for a brief comparison of each horseback riding instructor certification offered by these five third-party riding instruction certification organizations.
Table 1

*Comparison of U.S. Horseback Riding Instructor Certification Third-Party Organizations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>PATH Intl.</th>
<th>USDF</th>
<th>ARIA</th>
<th>CHA</th>
<th>USEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines offered</td>
<td>All disciplines under adaptive and therapeutic riding</td>
<td>Dressage</td>
<td>Hunt seat (fence work), hunt seat (flat work), eventing, saddle seat, dressage, western pleasure and equitation, driving, show jumping, endurance riding, recreational riding, sidesaddle, mounted patrol officer, reining, riding to hounds, western dressage</td>
<td>All disciplines</td>
<td>Eventing (dressage, show jumping, and cross country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic region</td>
<td>All 50 U.S. States</td>
<td>All 50 U.S. States</td>
<td>All 50 U.S. States</td>
<td>All 50 U.S. States</td>
<td>All 50 U.S. States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long is the certification good for before renewal?</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinics or workshops required for certification?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson teaching record required to certify?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show record required to certify?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified mentor required to certify?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No – but may be required after attending a workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of application fee</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>Included with workshop fee</td>
<td>Included with workshop fee</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>PATH Intl.</th>
<th>USDF</th>
<th>ARIA</th>
<th>CHA</th>
<th>USEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price of clinics/workshops</td>
<td>$330 for optional online course, $500-$1000 for optional preparatory in-person workshops</td>
<td>$200-$500 for optional in-person workshop series</td>
<td>$595</td>
<td>$750-$1000 (included is one year of CHA membership)</td>
<td>$400, 2 workshops required -  - Teaching of Dressage Teaching of Jumping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of examination</td>
<td>Nonmember: $650 Member (professional level): $525</td>
<td>Included with application fee</td>
<td>Included with workshop fee</td>
<td>Included with workshop fee</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal fees</td>
<td>Nonmember: $95 certification maintenance fee annually</td>
<td>$50 annually</td>
<td>$95 annually</td>
<td>$95 every 3 years as long as CHA membership is maintained ($75 annually)</td>
<td>$95 annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education credits (CEU) required to renew?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The biggest differences between organizations are what disciplines are offered for certifying instructors to specialize in, certification fee structure, and whether or not workshops are required for certification acquisition. ARIA stands alone in not requiring Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for maintaining certification. Annual maintenance fees are similar between all organizations, and all organizations except for CHA and ARIA require proof of lesson teaching before certification can be acquired (for the entry-level certification).

Table 2 offers a brief description of PATH Intl. and certification requirements.

PATH Intl. had a very structured fee layout for nonmembers and PATH Intl. members.

**Table 2**

*Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International Certification Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and headquarters</th>
<th>Founded in 1969, headquarters in Colorado</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification pre-requisites</td>
<td>18 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult and child CPR/First Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete the PATH Intl. Standards online course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete PATH Intl. Standards exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification requirements</td>
<td>Nonmember:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application: $250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study materials (optional): $179-$199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standards exam: $30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching hours: 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer hours: 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member (professional level):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application: $150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study materials (optional): $129-$149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standards exam: $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching hours: 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer hours: 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEU requirements</td>
<td>20 CEU’s:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 12 disability or mental health education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 4 hours of core requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 4 hours of general education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of certification offered</td>
<td>Basic, Advanced, Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because PATH Intl.’s Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor is accredited with an outside organization, it is required to offer certification to nonmembers. PATH Intl. also has the strictest requirements for CEU completion and is the only organization that does not require any proof of instructor’s personal riding ability. It is estimated that the PATH Intl. certification takes 1-2 years to complete.

Table 3 offers a brief description of the USDF and certification requirements. The USDF had the strictest requirements for instructor candidates prior to certification: several online modules, written letters of recommendation, and 3 scores from competing in USDF-rated horse shows. All CEUs and certification preparations require membership or affiliation with the organization, so therefore certification is inaccessible to nonmembers. It is estimated that the USDF certification takes 3-5 years to complete.

### Table 3

**U.S. Dressage Federation Certification Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and headquarters</th>
<th>Founded 1973, headquarters in Kentucky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Certification pre-requisites | 18 years of age  
Current First Aid certification  
SafeSport training module  
Current USDF member  
Completion of USDF Online Education modules  
3 written letters of recommendation  
3 scores of showing at USDF/USEF recognized competitions from 3 different judges:  
- Two of 65% or higher at first level test 3 or higher  
- One of 65% or higher from any other first level test or higher |
| Certification requirements | Submit a resume showing three (3) years teaching and training experience |
| CEU requirements | 16 CEU’s  
- Attendance at any USDF program, USEF judge clinics, USEF judge forums, lectures, mounted lessons, etc. |
| Levels of certification offered | Training through First Level, Second Level, Third through Fourth Level, FEI A, FEI B |
Table 4 offers a brief description of ARIA and certification requirements. The youngest of all the certifying organizations, ARIA does not require teaching experience for its entry-level certification. Candidates are required to submit essays on teaching philosophy, which is unique to ARIA. Also unique to ARIA is the lack of requiring CEUs for recertification. It is estimated that ARIAs certification takes 2-3 months to complete; 2 months to prepare online submissions and then attending a one-day evaluation in-person.

Table 4

*American Riding Instructor Association Certification Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and headquarters</th>
<th>Founded 1984, headquarters in New Hampshire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Certification prerequisites | 18 years old for Level I (no teaching experience required)  
                               21 years old for Level II (3 years teaching experience)  
                               25 years old for Level III (6 years of teaching experience) |
| Certification requirements | Two essays  
                              Two photos (one headshot, one mounted)  
                              Video of primary riding specialty  
                              Candidate classroom presentation on any desired riding topic  
                              Each candidate for certification takes the Level I/II tests: The Horse, General Horsemanship and Level I/II specialty tests for each specialty applied for (i.e., Hunt Seat, Dressage, Western, etc.) |
| CEU requirements | n/a |
| Levels of certification offered | Level I, Level II, Level III |

Table 5 offers a brief description of CHA and certification requirements. CHA has the strictest requirements for attending a workshop. CHA allows instructors to certify as young as 16 (for an assistant instructor certification), making it the most accessible organization to younger population. While lesson record is not required for certification,
level of certification granted is dependent upon proof of skill which requires significant
preparation or experience in riding and instruction. CHA requires the largest amount of
CEUs of any organization. It is estimated that CHAs certification takes a year to
complete.

Table 5
Certified Horsemanship Association Certification Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and headquarters</th>
<th>Founded 1967, headquarters in Kentucky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification prerequisites</td>
<td>16 years old for assistant instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 years old for instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 years old and Level 4 in English and western for master instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification requirements</td>
<td>40 hours minimum workshop, of which 20 are teaching or skills displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Required presentations on risk management, teaching techniques, herd management, industry standards and professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pass a written exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with clinic instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEU requirements</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CHA regional and international conferences, CHA webinars, First Aid/CPR training, riding lessons, auditing workshops, clinics, regional horse expos, formal courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of certification offered</td>
<td>Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, Master</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 offers a brief description of the USEA and certification requirements. The
oldest of all the certifying organizations, USEA has rigorous safety standards for
instructors. Utilizing other national licensure platforms like SafeSport, candidates cannot
certify without proof of training in concussion protocol, SafeSport training, and obtaining
liability insurance. Unique to USEA is also obtaining three letters of recommendations
from students, other organizations require recommendation from mentors but not
students. It is estimated that USEAs certification takes 1-2 years to complete.
Table 6

*U.S. Eventing Association Certification Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History and headquarters</th>
<th>Founded 1959, headquarters in Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Certification prerequisites | 18 years old  
Current USEA member  
USEA Instructor workbook  
Liability insurance  
CPR/First aid certification  
SafeSport training  
Concussion protocol training  
National background check |
| Certification requirements | 3 letters of recommendation from current/past students  
Complete Eventing Coaches Program workbook  
Complete Eventing Coaches Program standards booklet  
Assessment ($500) |
| CEU requirements | 4 activity credits every year  
- USEA clinics, judge seminars, workshops, etc. Must be verified. |
| Levels of certification offered | Level I, Level II, Level III, Level IV, Level V |

**Conclusion**

Despite the growing acceptance and establishment of riding instructor certification and licensure programs abroad, nothing is known about how the equine industry views instructor certifications in the U.S. In the equine industry, one might say that certifications are there to protect the consumer. Consumers (being the student or takers of riding lessons) expect a certain level of competency and care that comes along with a certification, but can these certifications be held to such a standard? Do consumers care about whether or not their instructor is certified, or know what goes behind the acquisition of a certification? An online survey is potentially a way to fill in this gap of industry need, understanding, and instructor certification competencies and options. Utilizing an online survey is a cost-effective way to gain input from the local community.
and beyond (Archer, 2003). A certification typically indicates a level of dedication to improving knowledge and upholding standards, as well as being tested to a standard.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to analyze the U.S. equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the U.S., as well as explore the expectations that consumers have of instructors and instructor selection criteria. The results of this study will help professional organizations, third-party stakeholders, and post-secondary education in the development of programming and certification acquisition for professional riding instruction.

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design study was determined to be best to investigate certified and non-certified riding instructors’ self-efficacy and consumer perception. In this convergent design, the integration of both data sets from instructors and competencies developed from certification organizations will help to form a complete understanding of the issues being explored and to validate one set of findings with the other. Riding instruction in the U.S. has very few resources in the form of peer-reviewed literature, so much of what is explored in this study will be the foundation of other riding instruction studies, and therefore must be built by this study and backed up by varying methods in order to ensure proper interpretation. Mixed method studies add value by increasing the legitimacy of the findings, informing the collection of the second data source, and assisting with knowledge creation (McKim, 2016). The Explanatory
Sequential Mixed Method (see Figure 1) design and the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluator model was used to identify themes in currently available professional riding instruction certification as well as the construction of the equine industry’s expectations of professional instructors based on a consumer survey. In the application of horseback riding instruction certifications and riding instructor self-efficacy in the U.S., six research objectives (RO) were addressed.

RO 1: Identify the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S.

RO 2: Describe the attitudes towards certification in the US.

RO 3: Describe the self-perception of currently certified and non-certified riding instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency.

RO 4: Identify and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction certification in the U.S.

RO 5: Collect information on the average riding lesson demographic in the US.

RO 6: Describe the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding instructors in the US.

Limitations

With no official database available, all riding instructors contacted were contacted via certifying organizations (such as the USDF, CHA, or USEA databases) or through social media outreach, which limited the possibility of getting responses from riding instructors who are not certified. There is no current data available on the size of the equine riding industry, though a survey from the American Horse Council in 2017 proposed that there were close to 1.2 million people involved in the equine industry.
However, this includes grooms, stable hands, trainers, veterinarians, farriers, and many other professions besides riding instructors. The frame for the study included horseback riding instructors over the age of 18 who taught part-time or full-time. All those included in the study were 18 years of age or older, which may not engage younger riding instructors who have different perspectives on industry expectations.

Nonresponse bias is a limitation but was addressed through careful survey design, multiple reminders to take the survey being sent out, short survey design, and incentives for completing the survey. An unbiased statistic is a sample estimate of a population parameter whose sampling distribution has a mean that is equal to the parameter being estimated (Lavrakas, 2008). Under the usual assumptions of population normality and simple random sampling, the sample mean is itself normally distributed with a mean equal to the population mean (and with a standard deviation equal to the population standard deviation divided by the square root of the sample size).

**Quantitative Sample**

The target population for this study was horseback riding instructor, 18 or older, who has taught at least one horseback riding lesson, part-time or full-time. Geographic location did not matter. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, no vulnerable populations were contacted and participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time by exiting their web browser from the Qualtrics page. Access to this population was granted through digital communication; either via email, specific association web blasts (such as CHA), or social media posts. The sampling strategy was
as follows.

1. All of the associations being surveyed (PATH Intl., CHA, USDF, USEA, and ARIA) were contacted and asked to disseminate the instructor survey,

2. A follow-up email was sent to all of the associations being surveyed inquiring about the dissemination of the instructor survey, and only CHA communicated and disseminated the survey in their monthly email web-blast to members,

3. To gather non-certified instructor responses, social media (Facebook) was used to advertise the survey,

4. To gather consumer responses, social media (Facebook) and association (CHA) email web blasts were utilized,

5. Nonresponse bias was assessed,

6. Data were analyzed, and

7. Results were then explained, and inferences made.

Based on an a-priori power analysis using G-Power, using 0.15 as an estimated effect size (f), 0.05 alpha probability, 0.95 power (1−β), and three predictors, this study needed \( n = 125 \) total respondents for generalizability (Faul et al., 2007). A medium effect size was used for this calculation, assuming the regression model was going to find .55 a medium effect and was not based on previous research.

The inclusion criteria for teachers to participate in this study were as follows: the respondents of both surveys must be over 18 years of age, and respondents for the instructor survey must have taught horseback riding lessons in the past or are currently teaching, and respondents for the consumer survey must have taken at least one horseback riding lesson; all others were excluded.
Instrumentation

The survey instruments consisted of questions developed and adapted to assess the quantitative research questions posed in this study. Qualtrics surveys were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from both populations of horseback riding instructors and consumers. Within the Qualtrics platform, users can perform t tests, regression analysis, and significance testing and Qualtrics meets the highest IRB and security standards in the current research industry. The advantages of online data collection include freedom of any in-person influence, respecting the limited cost and time of a researcher, respecting the participant’s time and ability to complete the survey, and the freedom to reach participants in varying geographic locations (Poon, 2011). Where previous surveys of horseback riding instructors and consumers do not exist, items aligned with the research questions were crafted in consultation with a committee of experts. This committee was comprised of equine researchers, Extension equine specialists, current horseback riding instructors, current horseback riding lesson students, and professional equine association staff.

A Qualtrics online survey (Appendix A) was used for data collection from certified and noncertified horseback riding instructors in the U.S. This survey was focused on the perceived self-efficacy of riding instructors as it relates to riding technique instruction. Questions were asked about certification status, level of competency, whether or not the professional believes a certification improved self-efficacy, as well as understanding, and perceived barriers to certification. It is important to understand what barriers prevent riding instructors from pursuing professional certification so that if self-
efficacy is improved through certification, it can be understood how to help professionals align with these findings. Additionally, two open-ended questions were added to the survey asking instructors what the perceived benefits were to achieving certification, as well as why or why not instructors were interested in getting a professional certification. Table 7 identifies where items from each construct in this survey originated, along with additional information about each measure.

**Table 7**

*Summary of Measures used to Develop the Instructor Survey Instrument*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Number of statements</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and professional characteristics</td>
<td>Binary, multiple-choice, 5-point Likert</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of self-efficacy</td>
<td>5-point Likert, qualitative open-ended answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification status</td>
<td>Binary, selection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards certification</td>
<td>5-point Likert, open-ended answer, binary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to certification</td>
<td>5-point Likert</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another Qualtrics online survey (Appendix B) was used for data collection from consumers of horseback riding lessons in the U.S. This survey was focused on collecting information to describe horseback riding lessons in the U.S. including price, duration, and purpose, as well as characteristics that students look for in their instructors. There were also questions regarding whether or not a student would be willing to pay more money
for a certified instructor and how much more. Table 8 identifies where items from each construct in this survey originated, along with additional information about each measure.

Table 8

*Summary of Measures used to Develop the Consumer Survey Instrument*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Number of statements</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>Binary, multiple-choice, 5-point Likert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding lesson description</td>
<td>Multiple choice, open-ended answer, binary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor characteristics</td>
<td>Binary, levels of importance, multiple choice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Developed by researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrument Summary of Measures: Instructor Survey**

**Personal and Professional Characteristics**

The survey instrument developed for the horseback riding instructor consisted of personal and professional demographic items. The personal demographic items in this survey pertained to gender, ethnicity, age, geographic region in the U.S., and the highest level of education. Professional demographic items in this survey pertained to self-assigned riding level, disciplines ridden in, years of teaching experience, the purpose of riding lessons taught, hours spent per week teaching, hours per week spent in the saddle, self-assigned level of instruction proficiency, and what disciplines are taught by that instructor.

**Perception of Self-Efficacy**

Three questions in the survey instrument were used to measure the self-efficacy of
horseback riding instructors. One asked riding instructors to give qualitative answers to the question “In your opinion, what are the benefits of receiving certification?” The other two questions asked whether their certification improved their ability to execute behaviors necessary to be successful as a horseback riding instructor and then listed 14 different competencies in which the instructor would rate their opinion of whether or not the certification increased their competency. These final items ask respondents about their comfort and familiarity with delivering equine-related education, amongst other things. These three questions, respectively, represent three subconstructs of self-efficacy: perceived improvement, ability to perform, and competency requirements. For the purposes of the data analysis, this study aggregated all three of the subconstructs of horseback riding instructor sense of self-efficacy, as defined by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), into one measure of overall instructor sense of self-efficacy.

**Certification Status**

Certification status was ascertained by a simple yes or no question. If instructors were certified, the survey instrument used skip logic to provide a question about which third-party organizations the instructors were certified with.

**Attitude Towards Certification**

The survey instrument measured attitude towards certification with four different questions. One such question utilized a 5-point scale ranging from “Not at all satisfied” to “Extremely satisfied” to better understand if instructors found certification important. Another question utilized a 5-point scale ranging from “Not at all” to “Extremely” to
better understand if instructors felt that certification improved their ability to execute behaviors necessary to teach horseback riding successfully. Sample items include the following: Would you be interested in getting a professional horseback riding instructor certification, yes or no? Please explain your answer.

**Barriers to Certification**

One question at the end of the survey asked respondents to rank which of the listed items were perceived as barriers to certification on a 5-point scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” Barriers listed were as follows.

- Time required to attend workshops/take exams
- Expense
- Geographic location
- Lack of legislature requiring certification (governmental motivation)
- I believe this certification will not improve my ability to instruct
- I believe I don’t have the knowledge base to get certified
- I believe I don’t have the riding skills to get certified
- I do not have access to a mentor due to my geographic location
- I do not know how to find a mentor

**Instrument Summary of Measures: Consumer Survey**

**Personal Characteristics**

The survey instrument developed for the horseback riding consumer consisted of personal demographic items. The personal demographic items in this survey pertained to gender, ethnicity, age, geographic region in the U.S., and the highest level of education. Other related demographic items in this survey pertained to the self-assigned riding level
and how many years the student had taken riding lessons.

**Riding Lesson Description**

Five questions were designed to better understand the typical U.S. horseback riding lesson. Two questions were open-ended answer questions about the average duration of a lesson and the average price of a lesson. Other questions were multiple selections where consumers were asked what type of lessons they took, and for what purpose the lessons were (e.g., recreation, competition, etc.).

**Instructor Characteristics**

To better understand what the consumer is seeking from U.S. horseback riding instructors; four questions were asked regarding the characteristics of riding instructors that the student looked for. Three questions were specifically related to whether or not a student wanted a certified instructor, and if they would pay more for a certified instructor, another question asked the student to rank in order of importance which characteristics they look for in an instructor. The characteristics are as follows.

- Horsemanship skills
- Certification
- A show record or competition experience in a specific riding discipline
- Liability insurance
- Good soft skills (communication, coaching technique, etc.)
- Degree from a university in equine studies

**Study Variables**

With the first study objective, the independent variable was certification, and the
The dependent variable is self-efficacy. The hypothesis being tested is that certification will increase an instructor’s self-efficacy. Integration in convergent design can be done in two ways: (a) by presenting findings of the qualitative study followed by the quantitative study or vice versa, or (b) by transforming the qualitative data into counts and integrating the transformed qualitative dataset into quantitative data. This study used the latter approach, where data from the competency building was put into counts and turned into quantitative data as well as with the instructor survey. The counts were then used to look for a correlation between two things: the correlation between certification and self-efficacy, and the correlation between certification and self-efficacy of riding skill competency.

Data Analysis

The alpha level for significance for both sets of survey results was determined a-priori to be 0.05 (5%). Alpha represents an acceptable probability of a Type I error in a statistical test, and equal to or less than 0.05, the data will be deemed statistically significant. Correlation is dependent on the nominal data, which looks into the mode of both sets of data. In this design, there was the possibility of outcomes having different sample sizes when quantitative and qualitative data are collected for generalization and deeper understanding. It also may be difficult to merge data based on texts with data based on numbers to examine the same issue. Based on the nominal questions, the analysis will provide descriptive statistics to report on.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the U.S.’ equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the U.S. The results of this study will help professional organizations, third-party stakeholders, and post-secondary education in the development of programming and certification acquisition for professional riding instruction.

Response Rates

Given that there is not an accurate estimate for the population size, total response rate is difficult to calculate. The total response rate for the instructor survey was 428 participants. Only one response was excluded as the respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria of the study. The total response rate for the consumer survey was 347 participants. Only one response was excluded as the respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria of the study.

Respondent Characteristics

Given that the last study done on horseback riding instruction in the U.S. was 1946 (Spence, 1946), it has been a long time since demographics have been collected on the average U.S. riding instructor or student of horseback riding lessons. The average respondent demographics were collected and can be seen in Figures 2-4. Figure 2 shows
that 83.82% of respondents identified as female, 14.71% identified as male, and .74% identified as gender nonconforming.

**Figure 2**

*Gender Demographics of Instructor Survey Respondents*

![Gender Pie Chart]

Total=408

As seen in Figure 3, 89.49% of respondents were Caucasian, with the next largest respondent ethnicity demographic being a three-way tie of 2.44% each between African American, Hispanic or Latinx, and mixed race (other). Only two respondents, or .49%, were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

**Figure 3**

*Ethnicity Demographics of Instructor Survey Respondents*

![Ethnicity Pie Chart]

Total=409
Figure 4 describes the regional location of each respondent. Each region was represented by 50 people or more, which makes it the only demographic that was represented in a way that can be compared. Most respondents were located in the Midwest, which represents 13 states. The least number of respondents lived in the Northeast, which represents 11 states. Interestingly, the Southwest had more responses than the Northeast region, when the Southwest only represents four states (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma).

**Figure 4**

*Geographic Region Demographics of Instructor Survey Respondents*

![Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents by region.](chart)

*Total=396*

The mean age for respondents was 39.9 years (σ = 14.83), with the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest being 79 years old. A majority of respondents, 99.51% (n = 407), had completed high school, and 91.2% (n = 373) of respondents had at least some form of college or trade school education. The average instructor taught 20.1 hours a week (SD = 12.56), so most instructors would be classified as part-time.

Most respondents (56.03%; n = 223) self-assessed their personal riding level as
“proficient.” Only 85 respondents (21.36%) self-assessed their personal riding level as “expert,” 2 respondents self-assessed their personal riding level as “beginner” (0.5%).

The instructors who responded were all over the map with the disciplines they ride. The three most popular personal disciplines were recreational trail riding with 10.35% \( (n = 242) \) of instructors, dressage with 9.71% \( (n = 227) \), and huntseat with 8.55% \( (n = 200) \) instructors.

Just over one-quarter (26.23%; \( n = 104 \)) of instructors responded that they teach only for recreational purposes, and 5.53% \( (n = 22) \) of instructors teach only for competition purposes. Most instructors \( (n = 225) \) teach a combination of recreational riders and competitive riders. Over one-third (35.43%; \( n = 141 \)) of respondents self-assessed their level of instruction as “competent,” while only 15.08% \( (n = 60) \) rated their level of instruction as “expert.” Only 3.02% \( (n = 12) \) of instructors rated their level of instruction as “beginner.”

The three most popular disciplines instructed were recreational trail riding with 11.02% \( (n = 175) \) respondents, 10.89% \( (n = 173) \) who teach dressage, and 9.89% \( (n = 157) \) who teach English pleasure. Disciplines listed under “other” included: polo, showmanship, horsemanship, ranch riding, equitation, therapeutic riding, gaited horse disciplines, packing, sidesaddle, Pony Club, colt starting, and beginning riding only.

**Objectives**

*Objective 1:* Identify the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S.
These competencies are listed in Tables 1-6 in Chapter 2. The biggest differences between organizations are what disciplines are offered for certifying instructors to specialize in, certification fee structure, and whether or not workshops are required for certification acquisition. ARIA, CHA, and USEA all require workshops for certification. PATH Intl., USDF, and USEA require lesson teaching records for their entry-level certifications, where ARIA and CHA do not. USDF and USEA were the only organizations that required a show record in their respective disciplines to certify. PATH Intl. stands alone with its requirement to a qualified mentor for the entry-level certification. ARIA stands alone in not requiring Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for maintaining certification. The most expensive instructor certification is the USEA certification, with a $75 application fee, $400 workshop fees, and $500 examination fee totaling $975 for the initial certification. The least expensive instructor certification is available through ARIA who requires $595 for the workshop fee, but the application fee and examination fee are included totaling $595 for the initial certification. Annual maintenance fees are similar between all organizations, and all organizations except for CHA and ARIA require proof of lesson teaching before certification can be acquired (for the entry-level certification).

**Objective 2:** Describe the attitudes towards certification in the U.S.

With the open-ended survey question in the instructor survey inquiring about what the benefits of certification are, here are some of the most common responses from respondents.

- Showcase of skills.
- Increase competency and personal confidence.
● Increase credibility.
● Networking opportunities and support systems.
● Insurance discounts and other discounts.
● Consistent standards to be held to, as well as a clear path for lesson progression.
● Acknowledgement of safety responsibilities.
● Improved knowledge of equine welfare.
● Increase in customer confidence and credibility.
● Increased employment opportunities and job stability.
● Added confidence for community donors and corporate sponsors.
● Increased knowledge of creating a safe atmosphere for students.
● Increase unity in the industry.

A majority of respondents (72.51%; n = 124) of respondents indicated that they were interested in pursuing certification. Some of the reasons listed were as follows.

● Increase professionalism and proficiency.
● Want to learn about working with different types of students.
● Want to attract clientele that are new to the horse world.
● There is value in being evaluated and being held accountable.
● Make it easier to find a job.
● Want to see “an actual standard” in the profession.

Just over one-fourth of respondents (27.49%; n = 47) indicated that they were not interested in pursuing certification. Some of the reasons listed were as follows.

● Expensive.
● Inaccessible.
● Busy schedule, hard to accommodate time for certification.
● There is no governing body.
● Not required for business in the U.S. (except Massachusetts and Maryland).
● Already have an equine-related college degree and don’t see the added value of a certification.
● Already have a client base, don’t need the added business.
● Poor reviews of current organizations.
● “People choose instructors based on who they get along with, their personal achievements, and student’s achievements – not certification.”

Nearly all (99.52%; n = 205) of certified instructors were at least “slightly satisfied” with their choice to be certified, with the majority of respondents (47.09%; n =
97) are “extremely satisfied” with their choice to be certified ($\mu = 3.66$, $\sigma = 1.07$, $\sigma^2 = 1.15$). Only one respondent (.49%) was “not at all satisfied” with their choice to be certified.

**Objective 3:** Describe the self-perception of currently certified and non-certified riding instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency.

Just over half (53.27%; $n = 212$) of instructors declared they are currently certified, while 46.73% ($n = 186$) are not. As shown in Figure 5, CHA had the largest number of certified respondents, and USEA had the smallest number of certified respondents. Table 9 indicates the percentage of certified instructors with their affiliated association. The largest percentage of certified instructors (42.03%; $n = 116$) were certified through CHA. The second largest percentage of certified respondents were from PATH Intl. (18.84%; $n = 52$). Other certifications listed under other included: Sally Swift Centered Riding, American Association for Horsemanship Safety, EAGALA, Parelli.

**Figure 5**

*Associations Respondents are Affiliated With*
### Table 9

**Associations Respondents are Affiliated with Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>PATH Intl.</th>
<th>USDF</th>
<th>ARIA</th>
<th>CHA</th>
<th>USEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of certified instructors</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of certified instructors</td>
<td>18.84%</td>
<td>6.88%</td>
<td>17.75%</td>
<td>42.03%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. Hunter Jumper Association, Meredith Manor, British Horse Society, German Riding Instructor license, and Massachusetts Riding Instructor license.

A large majority (95.63%; \( n = 197 \)) of respondents believed that gaining a professional certification improved their self-efficacy in some way, with most respondents (34.37%; \( n = 71 \)) believing that their self-efficacy improved “very much.” Only nine respondents (4.37%) believed that certification didn’t improve their self-efficacy at all.

When certified instructors were asked which skills certification helped them improve, every skill listed had most instructors responded that certification improved that skill level at least slightly. As shown in Tables 10 and 11, areas that saw the most amount of personal improvement due to certification were teaching student safety and preventative measure (96.1% of instructors saw improvement), teaching students how to best promote equine welfare and safety (93.17% of instructors saw improvement), and learning technical skills such as teaching to groups or different ages (93.1% of instructors saw improvement). As seen in Tables 10 and 11, areas that saw the least amount of personal improvement due to certification were preparing students to attend competitions (20.98% of instructors saw no improvement), preparing students to ride in specific
### Table 10

**Student-Based Teaching Skillsets Improvement Scale Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-based skillset</th>
<th>Not at all (%)</th>
<th>Slightly (%)</th>
<th>Moderately (%)</th>
<th>Very (%)</th>
<th>Extremely (%)</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching basics such as stop, start, steer &amp; walk, trot, canter</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>24.88</td>
<td>24.88</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students to ride in specific disciplines for competition</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>30.73</td>
<td>18.54</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students to ride with general skill for recreational purposes</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>15.27</td>
<td>25.12</td>
<td>30.05</td>
<td>20.20</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students to attend competitions</td>
<td>20.98</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>29.27</td>
<td>18.54</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students safety information and preventative measures to avoid injury to both horse and rider</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>24.39</td>
<td>30.24</td>
<td>34.63</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students basic equine anatomy, psychology, and cognition</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>27.94</td>
<td>25.49</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students how to best promote equine safety and welfare</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>14.63</td>
<td>26.83</td>
<td>27.80</td>
<td>23.90</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students about barn management topics (feeding, grooming, cleaning, etc.)</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>16.18</td>
<td>27.45</td>
<td>24.51</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11

**Instructor-Based Teaching Skillsets Improvement Scale Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor-based skillset</th>
<th>Not at all (%)</th>
<th>Slightly (%)</th>
<th>Moderately (%)</th>
<th>Very (%)</th>
<th>Extremely (%)</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of human anatomy in the context of riding instruction</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>27.45</td>
<td>14.71</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of human cognition in the context of riding instruction</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>25.25</td>
<td>35.15</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of equine biomechanics in the context of riding instruction</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>34.65</td>
<td>27.23</td>
<td>12.87</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of equine cognition in the context of riding instruction</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>19.21</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>24.63</td>
<td>13.79</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me instructional/coaching soft skills</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>11.88</td>
<td>27.72</td>
<td>25.25</td>
<td>27.72</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me instructional/coaching hard skills</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>29.56</td>
<td>31.03</td>
<td>24.63</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
disciplines for competition (19.02% of instructors saw no improvement), and teaching basics to students such as stop, start, steer and walk, trot, canter (14.63% of instructors saw no improvement).

**Objective 4:** Identify and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction certification in the U.S.

When instructors were asked what their perceived barriers to obtaining certification were, the top three responses were the expense, the time required to get certified, and geographic location made certification inaccessible (no workshops nearby, hardship to travel, etc.). Barriers listed such as not having the knowledge base to successfully achieve certification or riding skills to successfully achieve certification seemed to be lowest on the list of perceived barriers by those wanting to be certified. Table 12 lists the perceived barriers that instructors could pick from and rank on a 5-point Likert scale, including time required to attend, expense, geographic inaccessibility, and perceptions of ability to succeed at achieving certification.

Table 13 offers insight to the nonaggregate data from respondents regarding perceived barriers. Majority of respondents (47.73%) selected “agree” that time required to attend was a barrier, as well as the majority (41.48%) of instructors selected “agree” that expense was a perceived barrier to achieving certification. Over a fourth (41.29%) of respondents selected “agree” that geographic location made certification inaccessible. Regarding legislative requirements for certification, just under half of respondents (44.51%) agreed that a lack of regulations was a perceived barrier to acquiring certification. Barriers such as lack of knowledge base, a lack of riding skills, and access to a mentor were viewed as not a barrier by the majority of respondents.
Table 12

**Perceived Barriers to Instructor Certification Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived barrier</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>SD (σ)</th>
<th>Variance (σ²)</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time required to attend workshops/take exams</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legislature requiring certification</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that certification will not improve my ability to instruct</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the knowledge base to successfully achieve certification</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the riding skills to successfully achieve certification</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have geographic access to a mentor</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know how to find a mentor</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

**Perceived Barriers to Instructor Certification Nonaggregate Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived barrier</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (%)</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time required to attend workshops/take exams</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>47.73</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>17.93</td>
<td>41.58</td>
<td>34.24</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>41.29</td>
<td>30.83</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legislature requiring certification</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>16.09</td>
<td>31.37</td>
<td>22.79</td>
<td>21.72</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that certification will not improve my ability to instruct</td>
<td>17.11</td>
<td>25.67</td>
<td>22.73</td>
<td>20.89</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the knowledge base to successfully achieve certification</td>
<td>44.39</td>
<td>29.68</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the riding skills to successfully achieve certification</td>
<td>41.71</td>
<td>29.14</td>
<td>15.24</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have geographic access to a mentor</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>23.92</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>24.73</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know how to find a mentor</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>25.13</td>
<td>21.93</td>
<td>28.34</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 5: Collect information on the average riding lesson demographic in the U.S.

While some associations put out statistics of average members, this isn’t specific to students of horseback riding lessons. The respondent demographics of horseback riding lesson students were collected and can be seen in Figures 6-8. As seen in Figure 6, 93.31% of respondents identified as female, 6.38% identified as male, and none identified as gender non-conforming.

Figure 6

Gender Demographics of Consumer Survey Respondents

As seen in Figure 7, 87.23% of respondents were Caucasian, with the next largest respondent ethnicity demographic being Hispanic or Latinx (5.78%; \( n = 19 \)). Only two respondents, or .61%, were American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Figure 8 shows the regional location of each respondent. Most (79.64%; \( n = 262 \)) were located in the West, which represents California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The least number lived in the Southwest, which represents four states (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma).
The majority of respondents (99.39%; $n = 322$) had completed high school, and 89.36% ($n = 289$) of respondents had at least some form of college or trade school education.
Most respondents (46.52%; \(n = 147\)) self-assessed their personal riding level as “proficient.” Only 41 respondents (12.97%) self-assessed their personal riding level as “expert,” and seven respondents self-assessed their personal riding level as “beginner” (2.22%).

A large majority of respondents (96.55%; \(n = 308\)) have paid for riding lessons, while 3.45% \( (n = 11) \) had never paid for a riding lesson before. The mean age of respondents was 37.5 years old (\(\sigma = 13.84\)). The mean length of time the respondent had been taking riding lessons was 12.4 years (\(\sigma = 10.50\)), ranging from having only taken lessons for a few months to over 40 years. The average length of a lesson reported was 56.48 minutes (\(\sigma = 10.78\)), ranging from 30 minutes to 120 minutes in duration. The mean price paid for a lesson was $56.93 (\(\sigma = 25.86\)), ranging from $11.50 to $200 per hour. 30.48% \( (n = 96) \) of respondents take lessons strictly for recreational purposes, 12.38% \( (n = 39) \) of respondents take lessons strictly for competitive purposes, and 52.06% \( (n = 164) \) take lessons for a combination of recreational and competitive purposes.

The consumers who responded reported a wide variety of disciplines in which they had received instruction. The three most popular personal disciplines were western pleasure with 10.74% \( (n = 138) \) of consumers, dressage with 10.66% \( (n = 137) \), and show jumping with 8.02% \( (n = 103) \). Other disciplines listed by students include trick riding, Roman riding, showmanship, horsemanship, equitation, gaited horses, drill team, colt starting, ranch riding, liberty work, therapeutic riding, side saddle, and others.

**Objective 6:** Describe the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding instructors in the U.S.
A majority of respondents (80.39%; n = 250) agreed that the qualifications of the instructor will affect the rate at which the consumer pays for a riding lesson. While 19.61% (n = 61) disagreed. Interestingly, 58.23% (n = 145) of respondents stated that they would pay more for riding lessons from a certified instructor, while 41.77% (n = 104) stated that they would not pay more for riding lessons from a certified instructor. When those stated they would be willing to pay more, it was asked of them how much more money they were willing to pay per lesson. As seen in Figure 9, the majority of respondents (35.17%; n = 51) stated they would pay $10 more.

**Figure 9**

*Instructor Certification Value to Consumers (dollar amount)*

Table 14 provides percentages of respondents’ dollar amount that they would be willing to increase per lesson if the instructor were certified. One third of respondents would pay $10 more, and another 26.9% would be willing to pay $20 more for a certified instructor.
Table 14

*Monetary Value of Certification According to Consumer Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dollars more per lesson</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$5 more</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10 more</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20 more</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30 more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40 more</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50 or more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consumers were asked to rank, in order of importance, seven different characteristics that they look for when hiring a riding instructor. Table 15 provides more information about response data. As seen in Table 16, the following is the order of importance as determined by respondents when looking at the characteristics for a potential riding instructor.

1. Horsemanship skills
2. Good soft skills
3. Show record in a specific discipline
4. Liability insurance
5. Certification
6. Degree from a university in equine studies
7. Other

**Summary**

Results from these two surveys shows the wide variety instructor attitudes toward certification, perceived barriers to acquisition of certification, and expectations of instructors in the U.S. The average instructor respondent was a 39.9-year-old Caucasian female in the Midwest that teaches lessons part-time and is certified through a third-party
Table 15

*Instructor Characteristics Sought by Consumers Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived barrier</th>
<th>Mean (μ)</th>
<th>SD (σ)</th>
<th>Variance (σ²)</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsemanship skills</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show record in a specific discipline</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liability insurance</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good soft skills (communication, coaching technique, etc.)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree from a university in equine studies</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16

*Instructor Characteristics Sought by Consumers Nonaggregate Data (n = 302)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor characteristic</th>
<th>Rank (%)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor characteristic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>13.58</td>
<td>27.48</td>
<td>28.81</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horsemanship skills</td>
<td>53.97</td>
<td>33.77</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show record in a specific discipline</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>15.89</td>
<td>41.72</td>
<td>17.22</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liability insurance</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>28.81</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good soft skills (communication, coaching technique, etc.)</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>41.72</td>
<td>22.52</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree from a university in equine studies</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>24.17</td>
<td>53.32</td>
<td>11.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>77.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Respondents were asked to rank in order of importance, 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important.
organization. The average consumer respondent was a 37.5-year-old Caucasian female in the West that has been taking lessons for 12.4 years and pays $56.93 for a 60-minute lesson.

Almost all respondents that had pursued certification were at least slightly satisfied with their decision, with almost half of certified instructors reporting they were “extremely satisfied” with their decision to acquire a certification. Areas that saw the most amount of personal improvement due to certification were teaching student safety and preventative measure (96.1% of instructors saw improvement), teaching students how to best promote equine welfare and safety (93.17% of instructors saw improvement), and learning technical skills such as teaching to groups or different ages (93.1% of instructors saw improvement). The top three perceived barriers by instructors to acquiring certifications were, respectively, expense, time, and geographic inaccessibility.

The majority of consumer respondents take lessons for recreational and competitive purposes and agree that the specific qualifications of an instructor affect their selection process. The top three qualities respondents are looking for in instructors are, respectively, good horsemanship skills, good soft skills, and a show record in a specific discipline. Over half of the respondents stated they would pay more for a certified instructor, and one-third of respondents would pay $10 more per lesson.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This mixed-methods study was conducted to analyze the U.S. equine industry’s availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors, as well as to better understand consumer expectations of riding instructors. This study combined the theory of self-efficacy to measure the impact of certification on instructors, as well as the explanatory sequential mixed-method design to collect and understand consumer preferences. Using a mixed-methods design, this study combined qualitative survey answers with quantitative survey answers and a certification matrix to collect data. The demographics of respondents were described and the barriers which prevented instructors from obtaining certification were identified. This chapter outlines the interpretation of those findings and how they build upon previous research as well as recommendations for future research.

The theoretical framework that guided this study is the CIPP evaluation model (Stufflebeam, 1983). This model was used to identify themes in the currently available professional riding instruction certification programs and to construct the survey to determine the equine industry’s expectations of professional instructors. Context and input were collected through a better understanding of third-party organization’s requirements of certification candidates, and process was better understood through surveying the instructors and consumers. The product developed following the CIPP model is that instructors largely have a positive attitude towards certification, but time
and expense are barriers. Consumers largely indicated a positive attitude towards hiring certified instructors but seek other qualifications above certification. Third-party organizations should explore developing horsemanship skills, soft skills, and fostering competitive experience in their certification candidates to meet needs of the U.S.’ horseback riding lesson consumer.

Objectives

**Objective 1:** Identify the competencies and the process for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications of the five most popular third-party certifying organizations that are currently available in the U.S.

Identifying the competencies required for obtaining skill-based horseback riding instructor certifications from the five most popular third-party certifying organizations available in the U.S. proved to be incredibly difficult. This is unsurprising given the lack of unity in the horseback riding industry, but nonetheless frustrating. CHA and PATH Intl. were the most transparent with their grading criteria (i.e., sharing scales and reports used to grade instructors), where USDF and USEA only allowed current instructors-in-training (i.e., those who paid the application fee) to access materials related to competencies for certification. ARIA’s system was completely subjective to those who graded participants at workshops and had no learning objectives or scales provided to the researcher that could be used to show proof of measuring competency. Because the five most popular organizations could not, or would not, share grading criteria for certification, a compilation of competencies could not be built.

This lack of unity, transparency, and communication is prevalent among large
organizations in the equine industry (Pickering & Hockenhull, 2019), and leads to a lack of consumer trust (Kang & Hustvedt 2013). For organizations seeking to meet the consumer’s desires, more transparency in grading criteria and access to study guides, modules, or other materials to help instructors succeed is recommended.

**Objective 2: Describe the attitudes towards certification in the U.S.**

Instructor survey results showed a positive attitude towards certification, being certified, and achieving certification. Satisfaction with certification on this scale had a mean score of 4.17 ($SD = 0.94$) on a 5-point scale, meaning that the average certified instructor was extremely satisfied with their decision to pursue certification and achieve certification. The most common responses to asking what the potential benefits of certification were a showcase of skills, increasing competency, and networking opportunities. Additional responses included, “[certifications are useful] to set myself apart from the idiots out there who ‘have a horse and teach lessons,’” and, “other instructors notice [certification], students don’t care [about certification].” It is interesting to note that peer pressure may play a factor in certification, not just consumer demand.

Those who were uninterested in gaining certification stated expense, schedule availability, and no legislative requirement for certification as their top reasons for their uninterest. A few respondents stated that “[certification] did not provide any new skills,” and that “current certifying organizations have poor reviews and seem like pyramid schemes.” These are interesting perspectives that should be considered by organizations who certify – perhaps a larger effort into transparency of fee structure, fee utilization and certification process can aid in addressing these concerns from instructors.
Objective 3: Describe the self-perception of currently certified and non-certified riding instructors’ self-efficacy when related to riding instruction competency.

Bandura identified several methods of improving self-efficacy: social modeling, social persuasion, psychological responses, and mastery experiences. Among the four sources of self-efficacy, mastery experiences were found to be the most powerful driver of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). When taking on new challenges and succeeding, such as attending a workshop and achieving certification, we are creating mastery experiences. According to Smith (2001), mastery experiences improve self-efficacy due to the fact that mastery experiences are based on personal experiences rather than secondhand accounts (i.e., reading a textbook, watching a video, etc.). Mastery experiences also allow one to directly observe the connection between investment of effort and effective performance, increasing one’s ability to expect successful performance in particular situations.

The second source of self-efficacy is social modeling, or vicarious experiences. Bandura argued that when we observe others doing well or performing poorly at activities, we can estimate our own likelihood of success or failure when performing similar activities based on the similarity or difference, we perceive between ourselves and the person we are observing (Wood & Bandura, 1989). When attending a clinic or workshop for certification, instructors are placed with other instructors and often act as the students for that instructor during mock lessons. This allows instructors to develop skills based on the success or failure of others in their workshops.

Perception of improvement of self-efficacy on this scale had a mean score of 3.65 ($SD = 0.07$) on a 5-point scale, meaning that the average certified instructor believed very strongly that the process of receiving a certification improved their capacity to
execute behaviors necessary to be successful in teaching horseback riding lessons. Just over one-third of respondents (34.37%; \( n = 71 \)) of respondents believed that their self-efficacy improved “very much,” which was the highest rating possible to give, and only 4.37\% (\( n = 9 \)) of respondents believed that certification didn’t improve their self-efficacy whatsoever.

There are many reasons why instructors believe that certification improved their self-efficacy as related to horseback riding instruction.

- Creating firsthand experiences with riding instruction through attending a clinic.
- Expanding comfort zone by placing oneself up for evaluation and scrutiny.
- Developing social modeling through viewing others be evaluated and scrutinized (Wood & Bandura, 1989).
- Setting goals related to preparation of certification and maintaining certification.
- Identification of hazards and unsafe behaviors (i.e., improperly fitting tack or a runaway horse) ahead of them occurring, giving instructors time beforehand to decide which actions to take in response to those challenges (Gollwitzer & Brandstatter, 1997).

When instructors were asked which skills saw improvement due to certification, every single skill listed in the instrument saw majority (over 80\%) response of improvement. The areas that saw the most improvement was directly related to riding skills such as stop, start, and steering and walking, trotting, and cantering independently. There was also a high percentage of improvement in ability to teach safety information and preventative measures for both horse and rider as well as instructing in equine welfare. This was not surprising, as the primary focus of certifying organizations is the basics of riding and hazard prevention in horseback riding. What was fascinating though
was the large amount of improvement that instructors saw in soft skills such as communication and technical skills such as coaching technique and teaching to different groups of riders. Most organizations focus on riding skill and riding skill instruction, not on specific development of instructor soft and technical skills, yet instructors reported improvement after gaining certification in these areas.

Areas that third-party certification organizations can improve upon would be teaching equine cognition and human anatomy. The development of knowledge in human anatomy and cognition was mixed. Some instructors reported high levels of improvement while about 10% of respondents reported no improvement. Given that understanding of the student is important to success of the student, this could be another area where certification organizations can improve their curriculum.

**Objective 4:** Identify and describe potential barriers to professional riding instruction certification in the U.S.

The top three barriers perceived by instructors to receiving certification were expense, time required to get certified, and geographic location made certification inaccessible. Expense is a difficult barrier to overcome. Certifying organizations must have a way to pay for clinicians and facility rental. However, most certifying organizations offer scholarships that will cover part of the certification fees or all of the certification fees. CHA offers scholarships specifically for certification, where PATH Intl., USDF, and USEA offer scholarships for continuing education programs. Scholarships for attendance are a great way to promote programs and address the needs of instructors. Reaching out to key stakeholders in equine competition, health, and breed associations could be a way for organizations to get sponsor money for scholarships.
Instructors often teach for supplementary income and taking time off from teaching lessons can cost a significant amount of money and halt progress made with students. Further, most instructors host their own herd of lesson horses and time off means organizing care for these horses while gone. Taking time off to travel to a location several hours away from an instructor’s home is often a daunting prospect. Organizations are often limited to where they can host certifications based on where facilities are located, amenities required (e.g., suitable equines, arena space, lodging), and willingness of a facility to host a certification. However, instructors listed geographic access as a significant barrier to gaining certification. One thing that certification organizations can do is perform outreach to facilities in areas where certification workshops have not been held before and go to the facility, rather than waiting for the facility to come to the organization.

More instructors agreed (42.78%) that certification would likely improve their ability to instruct, rather than instructors who disagreed (34.53%). This is promising news for certification organizations about increasing certified instructor numbers if they can help instructors overcome their top three perceived barriers of expense, scheduling, and geographic location preventing attendance to workshops.

**Objective 5:** Collect information on the average riding lesson demographic in the U.S.

Demographics data on horseback riding consumers on a national basis is severely limited. Acknowledging that 79.64% of respondents stated they were from the Western region, the average respondent is a 37-year-old Caucasian female who has completed at least some college. The mean riding lesson is 56 minutes in length and average price paid
for an hour-long lesson is $57. The mean consumer takes lessons for recreational and competitive purposes combined, with most respondents taking lessons for recreational purposes.

**Objective 6:** Describe the consumer’s preference for the selection of horseback riding instructors in the U.S.

Most respondents from the consumer survey (80.39%) agreed that the qualifications of instructors are important in deciding how much a consumer pays for a lesson, with horsemanship skills and good soft skills being the top two selection criteria for instructors. This is important information for those instructors seeking new clientele or certifying organizations wanting to prepare instructors appropriately for the job market. The third most important to consumers was whether instructors had a show record in a specific discipline or not, which is important for instructors to understand. For the 12.38% of consumer respondents that take lessons only for competitive purposes, this is likely an even higher requirement when hiring an instructor.

Proof of competitive success in a discipline, (e.g., western pleasure or saddleseat), shows the potential client that an instructor can perform certain skills and be judged to a set standard and relates to the social modeling aspect of self-efficacy (Lee et al., 2021). Higher similarity with a role model will have a more optimistic effect on self-efficacy and performance in contrast with low similarity (Nicklin & Williams, 2011). Self-efficacy is affected by observing other people’s accomplishments or execution of skill (George et al., 1992). When role modeling is used to improve self-efficacy and execution of skill, the role model should be like the individual.

Certification was ranked fifth most important to consumers, above only “a degree
from a university in equine studies.” This shows that consumers do not seek out certified instructors, but rather skills and abilities. These are skills and abilities that certifications may be able to provide, but can also be gained from experience, internships, competitive experience, and much more. Liability insurance was fourth most important to consumers, and all certifying organizations offer liability insurance discounts to instructors which could be a good way for instructors to attract clientele, though instructors don’t need to be certified to maintain liability insurance.

**Limitations**

The results generalizability to the broad population of horseback riding instructors is limited by the small response rate. There is not an accurate estimate of how many riding instructors there are in the U.S., but the number must be in the tens of thousands (AHC, 2017). With a sample estimate of 50,000 riding instructors in the U.S., that means the instructor instrument only represents .86% \( n = 428 \) of the total population. Differences may have indicated that the responders differed from the overall population. More responses could have been gained, but respondents were lost to the survey being confusing or too long, poor distribution channels, not a large enough incentive to complete the survey (i.e., not enough monetary incentive), and a lack of response due to the strain COVID-19 has placed on agricultural professionals, specifically research fatigue (Patel et al., 2020).

Another significant limitation to these surveys was ability to communicate with diverse populations in the horseback riding industry. I reached out to every third-party
certification organization that was included in the study, and only received a response from CHA of willingness to disseminate the survey to its members and through its social media channels. This could explain the high percentage of CHA respondents in the instructor survey and may reflect the results of self-efficacy in instructors as reflecting CHA’s processes more than any other organization. There is no governing body for registration or recognition of horseback riding instructors, so it was difficult to find channels to disseminate the survey through to access more instructors. Instructors who are not on social media or use technology were unable to complete the survey. In addition, there is not governing organization for students of horseback riding lessons or consumers of the industry, so the same limitations apply to the consumer survey. Another limitation of the consumer survey is that the majority of respondents are from the Western region of the U.S., so the demographics reflect more of the Western region average student of horseback riding lessons rather than a national demographic.

One must also recognize cultural differences between styles of riding and how that may affect an instructor’s perception of certification, or a student’s desire to have a certified instructor. English-style riding is typically more regulated than western disciplines, and therefore those who ride in English disciplines may look more favorably upon certification, whereas those who ride in a western discipline may be ambivalent. Even geographic differences can affect attitudes towards certification: the East Coast and Midwest instructors and consumers may look more favorably upon certification due to more regulation in those areas, whereas the West Coast and Southwest may look upon certification less favorably due to regional differences in agricultural profession.
regulation.

Additional recognition must be made that the average respondent was a 37.5-year-old Caucasian female in the western U.S. that has been taking lessons for 12.4 years and pays $56.93 for a 60-minute lesson. This may significantly impact consumer opinions of paying more for a certified instructor, as someone who is approaching 40 years of age likely has more disposable income for hobbies or passions like horseback riding. This population also likely cares more about competition, spending money on competitions, and succeeding in competitive spheres, which may influence the response that consumers seek instructors with a show record or proof of competitive success in specific disciplines. When doing this same survey with youth populations, and parents or guardians of youth horseback riders, selection criteria for instructors may be different.

**Recommendations**

The results of this study indicate that more research is needed in the field of horseback riding instruction. Additional surveying methods should be incorporated into future research, as well as case studies, quantitative research methods, and more qualitative research methods.

Another way to strengthen further research is to find an appropriate method of contacting horseback riding instructors and students. Developing some type of agency or database to track horseback riding instructors—indeedendent of certifying organization or discipline—would be incredibly important to further research in this industry.

The consumer survey should also be completed with youth horseback riders to
explore instructor selection criteria by that population. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the differences in instructor selection criteria between youth, adult, senior populations. It would also be interesting to specifically target beginning, amateur, intermediate, and professional horseback riders to learn of their preferences in hiring instructors. This could better inform post-secondary institution curriculum focused on equine studies as to what the industry standard is for instructor selection, and better inform third-party certifying organizations of grading criteria for each level of instructor.

Future research should further examine the potential benefits of professional certification for instructors, case studies comparing certified and non-certified instructor efficacy and safety rates, regional differences in instructor certification and qualification, regional differences in consumer preferences, as well as cooperation with third-party certifying organizations to mitigate confusion in the industry and create more unity for the industry. Further investigation into the idea of horseback riding as being as much about the psychological development of the rider as it is about the development of equestrian skill (West & de Bragança, 2012) is also warranted.

Conclusion

The horseback riding industry in the U.S. needs a clearly defined, reliable, and valid standard. A governing body or advocacy group for horseback riding instructors could fill this need. The results from the instructor survey demonstrated that there is improvement in self-efficacy when instructors are certified with a third-party horseback riding organization, as well as significant levels of improvement in teaching preventative
safety measures for students of horseback riding lessons. Consumers seek instructors who have a high level of horsemanship skill, good soft skills, and experience competing in specific disciplines. In closing, this study explored the perception of certification, which certifications are available, and what consumers use for instructor selection criteria. While further research is urgently needed, it is a solid first step towards a better understanding of horseback riding instruction in the U.S.

The primary takeaway from this study is that consumers seek instructors with good horsemanship skills, good soft skills, and experience competing in specific disciplines. These are more important qualities to the consumer than certification, though consumers are willing to pay more for a certified instructor when considering qualifications and pricing of lessons. Instructors that have acquired certification are largely satisfied with their decision to become certified and saw improvements in soft skills, technical skills, and preventative measures as a result of completing certification requirements. This information is useful to not only instructors, but also to higher education institutions or third-party certifying organizations that are interested in best preparing instructor candidates for success in the industry. More research is needed in this field of the equine industry, but this thesis is the start of more work.
REFERENCES


Garbett, D. (2014). Lessons on the Hoof: Learning About Teacher Education Through Horse-Riding. *Self-Study in Physical Education Teacher Education, 63–73.* [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05663-0_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05663-0_5)


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Instructor Survey Instrument
Question Tour Block 1

Informed Consent
You are invited to participate in a research study by Brian K. Warnick, Ph.D., a Professor in the Department of Applied Sciences at Utah State University (Protocol #12682). You are being asked to participate in this research because you currently work as a riding instructor or have in the past. The purpose of this study is to analyze the United States’ equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the United States. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Specifically, we are interested in analyzing the effect third-party organization certifications have on horseback riding instructors. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time for any reason during the survey by closing your web browser. However, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, you will not be able to withdraw after we have collected your responses. If you take part in this study, you
will be asked to complete this survey that includes open and close ended questions. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes. The possible risks of participating in this study include loss of confidentiality. Although you will not directly benefit from this study, it has been designed to learn more about horseback riding instruction and third-party organization certifications. We will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide remains confidential. We will not reveal your identity in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study. We will collect your information through Qualtrics. You will also be given the option to include your name and email in a gift card drawing completed through a separate Qualtrics form so as to keep your responses anonymous. Deidentified data will be maintained indefinitely. Contact information used for the random drawing will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. This survey data will be securely stored in a restricted-access folder on Box.com. Data gathered in separate Qualtrics for the gift card drawing will be stored in a USU box folder encrypted and password protected that is only accessible to the researchers. The identifying data collected for compensation purposes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

https://usu.co1.qualtrics.com/V2/Ed/GS7on8Block/GetSurveyPrintPreview?ContextSurveyId=SV_cPsJG1XOUeITFPw&ContextLibraryId=UR...
For your participation in this research study, you may enter yourself into a random drawing to win 1 of 4 $50 gift cards by filling out the additional Qualtrics survey at the conclusion of this survey. If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Brian Warnick, at (435) 797-0378 or brian.warnick@usu.edu. Thank you again for your time and consideration. If you have any concerns about this study, please contact Utah State University’s Human Research Protection Office at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

By continuing to the survey, you agree that you are 18 years of age or older, and wish to participate. You agree that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you are being asked to do. You also agree that if you have contacted the research team with any questions about your participation, and are clear on how to stop your participation in this study if you choose to do so. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

I agree that I am 18 years or older, as well as agree to the informed consent.

☐ Yes
I agree that I am currently a horseback riding instructor, or have been in the past.

- Yes
- No

**What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Other: [ ]
- Prefer not to say

**What is your ethnicity?**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Caucasian
What is your age?

What is your geographic location in the United States? Please select a region.

- West
- Southwest
- Midwest
- Southeast
- Northeast
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Less than a high school diploma
☐ High school diploma/GED
☐ Some college
☐ Associate’s degree
☐ Bachelor’s degree
☐ Master’s degree
☐ Doctorate degree
☐ Other

What skill level of riding would you assign to yourself?

☐ Beginner
☐ Advanced beginner
☐ Competent
☐ Proficient
☐ Expert

What disciplines do you/have you ridden in? Select all that apply.

☐ Dressage
☐ Reined cowhorse
How many years have you been teaching riding lessons?

For what purpose do you primarily teach riding lessons?

Recreation

Competition
Combination of recreation and competition
Other

How many hours per week do you spend teaching riding lessons?

How many hours per week do you spend in the saddle, aside from teaching lessons?

What level of instruction proficiency would you assign to yourself?

Beginner
Advanced beginner
Competent
Proficient
Expert
What disciplines do you instruct for? Select all that apply.

☐ Dressage
☐ Show jumping
☐ Huntseat
☐ English pleasure
☐ Cross country
☐ Eventing
☐ Saddles seat
☐ Driving
☐ Roping
☐ Cutting
☐ Reining
☐ Reined cowhorse
☐ Western pleasure
☐ Trail (competitive)
☐ Trail (recreational)
☐ Speed events (barrel racing, pole bending, etc.)
☐ Gymkhana
☐ 4H
☐ Racing
☐ Vaulting
☐ Other

Do you currently hold a horseback riding instructor certification?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Block 4

Which professional horseback riding instructor certifications do you hold currently?

☐ United States Eventing Association (USEA)
☐ United States Dressage Federation (USDF)
☐ Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA)
☐ American Riding Instructors Association (ARIA)
☐ Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Intl. (PATH)
☐ Other

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the decision to get an instructor certification?

☐ 1: Not at all satisfied
☐ 2: Slightly satisfied
☐ 3: Moderately satisfied
☐ 4: Very satisfied
☐ 5: Extremely satisfied
In your opinion, what are the benefits to achieving certification?

To what extent has the process of receiving a certification improved your capacity to execute behaviors necessary to be successful in teaching horseback riding?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

Please rank how much certification increased your ability in the following professional areas related to horseback riding instruction:

- Teaching basics such as stop, start, steer & walk, trot, canter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Slightly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students to ride in specific disciplines for competition.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students to ride with general skill for recreational purposes.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing students to attend competitions.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching students safety information and preventative measures to avoid injury to both horse and rider.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students basic equine anatomy, psychology, and cognition.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students how to best promote equine safety and welfare.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching students about barn management topics (feeding, grooming, cleaning, etc.).</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of human anatomy and cognition in the context of riding instruction.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Qualtrics Survey Software

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Slightly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of human cognition in the context of riding instruction.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of equine biomechanics in the context of riding instruction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving me a knowledge base of equine cognition in the context of riding instruction.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me instructional/coaching soft skills such as public speaking, arena presence, communication, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving me instructional/coaching hard skills such as teaching to groups, instructing different learners, age groups, and skill levels.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Block 5

Would you be interested in getting a professional horseback riding instructor certification, yes or no? Please explain your answer.

- Yes
- No

To what extent do you agree that each of the items below is a barrier to a professional achieving a horseback instruction riding certification?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time required to attend workshops/take exams</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location (no workshops offered near me, hardship to travel to nearest workshop, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of legislature requiring me to be certified</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that certification will not improve my ability to instruct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the knowledge base to successfully achieve certification.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe I don’t have the riding skills to successfully achieve</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certification.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not have geographic access to a mentor.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know how to find a mentor.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Powered by Qualtrics
Appendix B

Consumer Survey Instrument
Question Tour Block 1

Informed Consent
You are invited to participate in a research study by Brian K. Warnick, Ph.D., a Professor in the Department of Applied Sciences at Utah State University (Protocol #12682). You are being asked to participate in this research because you currently participate in horseback riding lessons, or have in the past.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the United States’ equine industry availability of riding instruction certification options and to describe the relationship between professional certification and the self-efficacy of riding instructors in the United States. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Specifically, we are interested in analyzing the effect third-party organization certifications have on horseback riding instructors. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time for any reason during the survey by closing your web browser. However, due to the anonymous nature of the survey, you will not be able to withdraw after we have
collected your responses. If you take part in this study, you will be asked to complete this survey that includes open and close ended questions. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes. The possible risks of participating in this study include loss of confidentiality. Although you will not directly benefit from this study, it has been designed to learn more about horseback riding instruction and third-party organization certifications. We will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide remains confidential. We will not reveal your identity in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study. We will collect your information through Qualtrics. You will also be given the option to include your name and email in a gift card drawing completed through a separate Qualtrics form so as to keep your responses anonymous. Deidentified data will be maintained indefinitely. Contact information used for the random drawing will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. This survey data will be securely stored in a restricted-access folder on Box.com. Data gathered in separate Qualtrics for the gift card drawing will be stored in a USU box folder encrypted and password protected that is only accessible to the researchers. The identifying data collected for
compensation purposes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.
For your participation in this research study, you may enter yourself into a random drawing to win 1 of 4 $50 gift cards by filling out the additional Qualtrics survey at the conclusion of this survey.
If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Brian Warnick, at (435) 797-0378 or brian.warnick@usu.edu. Thank you again for your time and consideration. If you have any concerns about this study, please contact Utah State University’s Human Research Protection Office at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

By continuing to the survey, you agree that you are 18 years of age or older, and wish to participate. You agree that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you are being asked to do. You also agree that if you have contacted the research team with any questions about your participation, and are clear on how to stop your participation in this study if you choose to do so. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.
I agree that I am 18 years or older, as well as agree to the informed consent.

- Yes
- No

I agree that I currently am participating in horseback riding lessons, or have in the past.

- Yes
- No

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other: [□]
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian

https://usu.co1.qualtrics.com/OEdit/Classification/Blocks/Ajax/GetSurveyPreview/?ContextSurveyId=SV_bkpodGqZCWEMJKe&ContextLibraryId=UR__ 4/10
Black or African American
Hispanic or Latinx
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
Caucasian

Other

Prefer not to say

What is your age?

What is your geographic location in the United States?

West
Southwest
Midwest
What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Less than a high school diploma
- High school diploma/GED
- Some college
- Associate’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Doctorate degree
- Other

How many years have you been taking horseback riding lessons?

Have you ever paid for horseback riding lessons?
What is the average duration (in minutes) of a riding lesson you pay for?

What is the average price for a riding lesson you pay for?

What disciplines do you/have received instruction in? Select all that apply.

- [ ] Dressage
- [ ] Show jumping
- [ ] Huntseat
- [ ] English pleasure
- [ ] Cross country
- [ ] Reined cowhorse
- [ ] Western pleasure
- [ ] Trail (competitive)
- [ ] Trail (recreational)
- [ ] Speed events (barrel racing, pole bending, etc.)
For what purpose do you primarily take riding lessons?

- Recreation
- Competition
- Combination of recreation and competition
- Other

What level of riding skill would you assign to yourself?

- Beginner
- Advanced beginner
- Competent
- Proficient
- Expert
What characteristics do you look for in a riding instructor? Rank in order of importance.

Certification

Horsemanship skills

A show record, or competition experience, in a specific discipline

Liability insurance

Good soft skills (communication, coaching technique, etc.)

Degree from a university in equine studies

Other

Do the qualifications of the instructor affect the rate you pay for a lesson? Meaning, the more qualified in your personal assessment, the more you’re willing to pay for a lesson?

☐ Yes

☐ No
Block 1

Would you be willing to pay more for lessons from an instructor who has been certified?

☐ Yes
☐ No

How much more are you willing to pay for a certified instructor?

☐ $5 more
☐ $10 more
☐ $20 more
☐ $30 more
☐ $40 more
☐ $50 or higher more
☐ Other