



Editorial

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2024 Volume of the European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy (EJQRP). There are eleven informative and interesting papers for your perusal, spanning the journal's focus on practitioner-led qualitative research, psychotherapeutic practice, and experience of psychotherapy. The papers span methodology, method, emotion, and identity, neatly capturing the importance and creativity of qualitative research in enhancing and developing psychotherapy experience and practice.

However, more on these later because first, as the new journal Editor, the most important thing for me to do is to thank all those who have been involved in both the production of this Volume and in the development of the journal to its current high quality, international status.

The European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy was first conceived by Ken Evans as a platform to advocate and encourage research, particularly qualitative research, in psychotherapy, and to encourage new writers to hone their craft towards publication. Although we are at a stage now where many psychotherapists expect and want to carry out research to enhance and inform their profession, when the journal was founded this was more of an aspiration than a reality. The rapid trajectory of the journal's development, under first Ken's and then Linda Finlay's dedicated editorship, sees it now as an important platform to contribute and share practitioner-led, and practitioner-based qualitative research for practitioner-researchers at all stages of their careers.

The outgoing Editor, Linda Finlay, took over the Editorship of the journal in 2018, with the generous sponsorship of the European Association for Integrative Psychotherapy (EAIP, euroaip.eu). EAIP continue to sponsor the journal and provide a supportive Editorial Board that ensures we not only have some financial support but also a sounding board for new ideas and developments.

Linda has worked tirelessly to develop EJQRP into the online journal with a reach across Europe and beyond that it is today. She has not only carried out the administrative and production tasks but has also supported and encouraged numerous authors to develop their writing to high academic publication standards, as evidenced by these words from one journal contributor:

I feel very thankful that the first academic article that I published was in the EJQRP. I was somewhat of a novice when it came to academic publishing, and I genuinely feel that Linda took me under her wing and went the extra mile in terms of supporting me through the publication process. She was on hand to offer useful advice and even put me in touch with other academics who had published work through the journal and who were happy to meet with me and help me to ensure that my writing was the best it could possibly be. Linda, with her supportive approach and gentle encouragement, made a potentially daunting task feel manageable and enjoyable. Once complete, I felt a sense of confidence in my writing, and this is largely down to Linda's encouragement and belief in me. Thank you, Linda, you will be missed!

Krystal Scott, PhD candidate at Liverpool John Moores University.

All those who have worked with Linda on the journal recognise her dedication to it. A former journal co-editor highlights the growth of the rigorous peer review process:

Working with Linda on the European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy was a stimulating and educative experience. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to participate in Linda's vision of making the Journal a high-end quality publication that attracts a diverse range of qualitative-based research and from a diverse range of qualitative researchers.

Under Linda's guidance the Journal carefully grew a diversity-strong panel of reviewers that undoubtedly enhanced the quality of published submissions. I know from having submitted my own research-based work to the Journal just how exacting the process of peer review has become and how it consistently serves to improve and maintain the quality of published papers.

Linda established 'best practice' in all areas that are required to support the Journal and I especially enjoyed working with her on the first online survey of the Journal's readership. Towards the end of Linda's role as editor-in-chief of the European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy it was especially pleasing to have her expertise and knowledge as a co-author of a paper which was published in the Journal in 2023.

Dr Alistair McBeath, Metanoia Institute.

The current Deputy Editor, Peter Blundell, recognises Linda's work outside of the journal, and its value to practitioner-researchers:

It has been a pleasure to work alongside Linda as a co-editor for the journal and see first-hand how supportive she has been to new qualitative researchers who have submitted articles to the journal. It can be a daunting process to put your writing out for peer review, and Linda's empathic approach to the editor's role has meant that this process has been a lot less daunting for many first-time authors. Linda is a prominent figure in qualitative research, particularly known for her extensive contributions to the field including her work around phenomenology and reflexive practice. Her articles and books have provided deep insights

into how people perceive and make sense of their experiences through qualitative research. Her book Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World has been a particular favourite of mine; it is a text I regularly recommend to students who are trying to make sense of their own approach to research and practice. I am sad to see her leave the editor's role but confident her presence will continue to be felt through the work of the journal for many years to come.

Dr Peter Blundell, Liverpool John Moores University.

Alan McPherson, the current Reviews Manager for the journal acknowledges Linda's influence on both his writing and his role in the journal to support authors:

I believe I wouldn't be where I am today without Linda's gentle encouragement. Her enthusiasm in inviting me to write a reflective article about my experiences overcoming the challenges of publishing my master's research set me on the path I find myself on now. Linda was instrumental in recognising my potential and gently urging me to "give it a go." Working more closely with her now, I continue to benefit from her supportive and confident guidance. Linda gracefully shares her years of experience, consistently offering support and encouragement while also imparting her knowledge in a collaborative manner. It is an honour to continue serving the Journal in Linda's memory. I aspire to provide new researchers with the same belief and encouragement that Linda offered me, without setting them up for failure. I aim to offer support and honest feedback, while also fostering an environment for growth and change.

Alan McPherson.

For my own part, I extend profuse thanks to Linda for her support to me as I take over the Editor role, and am delighted that she has agreed to act as Consultant Editor as we navigate the journal's ongoing development.

Thanks must go also to Sofie Bager-Charleson from whom I am taking over the Editorship. Many readers will know of Sofie's writing, teaching and promotion of research in psychotherapy, and having this expertise brought to the journal only served to further advance it. We wish her well in her new role at Metanoia. Sofie offers a personal reflection on Linda's work on

reflexivity and its influence on her and other practitioner-researchers:

Linda Finlay is for many researchers, me included, our undisputed expert on reflexivity. My own research and writing have remained heavily influenced by Linda's suggested 'multiple routes' to a 'reflexive journey' (Finlay & Gough 2003). Linda starts that book by asserting that most people may agree on the value of reflexivity but few are certain about 'how to do it?'. Linda helps us by offering 'five reflexive variants' as part of a vast 'map over subjectivity'. As examples, the 'reflexivity on introspection' helps us to discuss how researchers may 'draw on their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding' (Finlay & Gough 2003, p. 6). The 'reflexivity as intersubjective reflection' covers references to both researcher's and participant's defended self, bringing our respective inter- and intrapersonal patterns to the forefront - for instance with reference to psychoanalytic perspectives. The 'reflexivity as social critique' in turn socio-economic, gender- and sexuality aspects to our subjectivity and positioning in research, helpful for instance to explore Whiteness/Decolonisation contexts for the research. It is, in fact, difficult to think of areas not covered by Linda in the field of reflexivity. I am welcoming this opportunity to express my thanks for the inspiration and knowledge that Linda offers to researchers seeking to 'do reflexivity' with interest in how our own positioning influences and constructs the collection, selection and interpretation of our studies.

Sofie Bager-Charleson.

The help, expertise and support from Alan McPherson, the Reviews Manager, and Peter Blundell (Deputy Editor) is invaluable, and the additional key tasks carried out by Susan Ram, Ben Potter, Tamsin Hullah and Maaria Koivisto mean that we have a professional and efficient production team. None of it is possible without the authors and reviewers though so please keep your submissions coming, and let us know if you would like to be placed on the Reviewers database. If you are interested in learning more about journal management and production, please do consider volunteering to work alongside us to learn more. Contact me to express your interest and for further details.

And so, to the papers in this Volume. Qualitative research enables us to understand more about our experience as practitioners and the experiences of clients, and gives insight to the value and challenges of the psychotherapeutic relationship. It also highlights the importance of recognising the researcher role in and influence on the research. For research to be of value to the widest audience it must be inclusive and seek to acknowledge and address barriers to diversity and (in)equality (EDI). These barriers may be in accessing and providing psychotherapeutic support, in developing researcher identity, and in research design and practice. Researchers must look to themselves to understand how they can recognise such barriers, and ensure that their research works to both challenge and avoid reinforcing them. They can ask themselves questions about where and how they have acquired pre-existing knowledge of the research topic and participants, what gaps there may be in their knowledge and how they can fill them, whether the research question incorporates assumptions, biases and taken-for-granted knowledge, what implications there are for participant recruitment in the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and how accessible the methods of data collection are, for example. Awareness of researchers' perceptions of the world and people in it is essential to enhancement of reflexive engagement with the research process but this can be further enhanced with an acknowledgement of your researcher positionality. Understanding as much as you can about your positionality and how it intersects with issues such as power and privilege will help you to locate yourself in your research, and better adhere to EDI principles. It means locating yourself about the topic of the research so that you acknowledge personal positions about it, locating yourself about the participants to consider how you view yourself in relation to them, and locating yourself about the research context to acknowledge its influence on you and the research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023). Jessie King, an Indigenous academic who in a positionality statement identifies as Ts'mysen on his mother's side, and mixed Irish and Scottish on his father's side, reminds us that we need courage to pause and ask ourselves to acknowledge that as researchers we are exposed to multiple forms of knowledge and ways of knowing (King, 2023). King argues that there is significance in knowing who you are, (what makes you you?), and that it is important to make time to consider how this influences how you make decisions. It enhances understanding of how power and privilege

intersect with positionality and enables grounding in authentic relationships with others.

All the papers in this Volume include researcher reflexivity and illustrate it with reflective descriptions of the research process and writing up. Demonstrating reflexive awareness in research presented in EJQRP is a long-established criterion and we now encourage authors to also include researcher positionality statements. These enable the research audience to question and understand the researcher subjective influence, how their identities are represented in the research, and how these relate to the identities of the participants. In turn, readers can see not only the values that researchers are bringing to the research but also the value of the research itself.

Linda Finlay, offers an informative and comprehensive consideration of qualitative research and how it can be evaluated. The paper not only provides guidance, discussion and examples of qualitative research but includes personal reflections on the experience of constructing the paper. It provides invaluable insight and guidance from an experienced researcher and writer that will encourage qualitative researchers and enhance their research.

Janet L. Kuhnke & Sandra Jack-Malik extend the focus on qualitative research by exploring one researcher's reflexive ways of being. The paper highlights ways in which she sought to deepen her understandings of reflexivity and how she applied them to her reflexive practice when researching recovery from eating disorders, carried out whilst living through the global coronavirus pandemic. It highlights the challenges of being truly reflexive and helpfully offers some creative ways of enhancing reflexive practice.

The next papers hone in on innovative and creative qualitative methods and approaches in psychotherapy research.

Cecilie Hillestad Hoff, Helene A. Nissen-Lie, & Hanne Strømme explore how non-verbal communication can be recognised and handled in psychodynamic practice. The research used multimodal qualitative methods to collect data for reflexive thematic analysis, and highlights the close relationship between therapists' capacity for emotion regulation and their nonverbal relational skills. Once again reflexive awareness and its

value both to research and psychotherapeutic practice is prominent.

Steven Segal brings hermeneutic existential phenomenology to the education of novice researchers to identify the importance of lived experience in teaching and learning research. It recognizes the emotional 'roller-coaster' of research journeys and describes how the skills of a psychotherapist can enable novice researchers to stay with their doubts and anxieties. This considered approach can bring a fresh reassurance to researchers and research educators alike, and highlights the value that being attuned to lived experience can offer to research competence.

Georgina Cardo and Keith Tudor compare key concepts of heuristic enquiry and tazkiyat-un-nafs, the Islamic concept of self/soul purification, and/or reformation of the spiritual heart (qalb) to outline key concepts of heuristic research methodology. Bringing a shared interest in cultural and religious identity and how it is, or is not considered in psychotherapy to the paper, the authors include personal reflections on undertaking research, and highlight their aims to support researchers considering integrating Islam into their psychotherapy research and practice. The paper raises important questions about inclusivity in both practice and research.

Jasenka Lukac-Greenwood and Sofie Bager-Charleson's paper describes the use of Free Association Narrative Analysis in a doctoral study by placing it into parameters and language of counselling psychology and psychotherapy research. In a detailed presentation of key junctions and critical decision-making processes the use of both technical guidelines and illustrations of reflexive engagement throughout, the paper will be of great interest to practitioner-researchers looking to employ a method that draws on their psychotherapist skills in their research practice.

The next papers in this Volume describe research that explores experience of both psychotherapist and client.

Helen Noble and Beverly Cole provide an innovative and personal exploration of the interplay between ambivalent emotions, creativity and resilience for a practitioner-researcher through a literature review and a creative non-fiction lyric essay format. It describes a self-search of one author's personal state affect between client sessions to examine whether

engagement in creativity can enhance a sense of resilience. The importance of using strategies to combat therapist burn-out and to support the development of therapist resilience is highlighted, as is the need for a stronger focus in therapist training on therapist emotion and affect outside the therapy room.

Ida Stange Bernhardt, Helene A. Nissen-Lie, Christian Moltu & Marit Råbu's paper brings another focus to the therapist experience and affect by describing research into how therapists experience their personal self as related to their professional role. The findings develop the view of congruence between the two as being predominantly useful, and suggest that a need for active awareness of potential tension and fusion between them should be developed and maintained. The importance of these findings is that they add experiential detail to recent models of therapist development.

David Hughes and Peter Blundell's paper describes how their research into therapists' experience of shame found that approaching it from a place of principled non-directivity may be helpful in transforming it so that it can support therapists to empathically attune to the client. In turn this enables them to support clients to explore their experiences of shame at their own pace. This paper brings insight from a person-centred perspective to how shame can be understood, and awareness of it utilised to inform therapeutic practice, thus broadening our understanding of shame across therapy practice orientations.

Karen M. Doyle and Barbara Hannigan explore experiences of the mental health implications of being racialized and the impact of this on experiences of psychological services. With data gathered from Black and multi-ethnic clients in Ireland a sobering finding that all recounted experiences of negative mental health implications leads to suggestions for change in practice and training and to increased accessibility to services.

Sofia Hörk, Vanja Vujičić, and Malin Fors, also consider racial identity and its impact on therapeutic practice by exploring experiences of female therapists and clients' dyads where both identify with a non-normative ethnicity, migration experience, racial identity, or experience of racialization in Sweden. They used abductive and reflexive thematic analysis to develop

the Minority Matrix from the data which shows how therapists navigate sameness versus too much closeness, and bridge a minority position and Swedish society. Drawing on critical whiteness studies, the social relevance of this paper illustrates how sharing non privilege similarities with clients can stem from societal racial identification.

I hope that you will find this collection of practitioner-led and practice-based qualitative research stimulating and thought-provoking, and welcome your contributions for consideration in the next Volume of the European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy.

Nollaig Frost, Editor-in-Chief, *EJQRP* September, 2024

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