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Editorial

Seeing the researcher in published research: is there a role for GenAI?

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2025 Issue of the European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy (EJQRP). If some of the papers here look familiar to you, it is likely because you have encountered them over the past year as 'Early Views' in the journal – monthly publication of single papers. The continuous publishing model which EJQRP moved to at the start of 2025, provides Accepted authors with dedicated attention to their papers during the Copyediting period and shorter waiting times to publication. In another new initiative for 2025, most of the papers have an accompanying video Abstract presented by its author on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@EJQRP>. Please do take a look, seeing the researcher describe their work can really help to bring the paper to life. Both innovations have come to fruition thanks to Peter Blundell, our Deputy Editor and Alan McPherson, our Reviews Manager, whose expertise and knowledge in technology and social media are invaluable in the management of EJQRP.

The topics of the papers in this Issue range from research into the work of psychotherapists, to experiences of being a client, to the therapeutic environment. As is customary for EJQRP there are also papers that describe and reflect on innovative qualitative research methods. All the papers bring a unique focus to the meaning and value of psychotherapy research, and together they offer comprehensive, multi perspective insight to the work

and roles of practitioners, researchers and practitioner-researchers. Each paper offers ways to consider and develop psychotherapy practice and research, and although subject matter varies, each is connected by its explicit focus on the humanness of psychotherapy practice and research. Seeing the researcher in each paper is important to EJQRP, and allows us as readers to understand how decisions have been made and enacted, as well as how the research has had an impact on the researcher. It may have challenged or changed pre-existing assumptions and understandings, raised further questions about researcher practice, or highlighted ways to inform psychotherapy training and supervision. As readers these insights to the person conducting the research help us to both assess the quality of the research, and its relevance, meaning, and value to us. By seeing the humans and the humanness in the research we can better understand and develop the humanness of psychotherapy practice – that of our own, and more widely, that of the profession.

EJQRP has always asked that researchers make explicit their reflexivity, and more recently has started asking for Positionality Statements to further inform readers about the person doing the research. Typically, EJQRP articles include reflexive insights, reflections, and illumination of motivations and agendas. Such extensive acknowledgement of the researcher is key to the value of qualitative research, and essential when considering research that explores human experience.....such as research that explores being a client or practitioner in psychotherapy. It allows us as fellow practitioners, researchers, practitioner-researchers, and clients, to consider the meaning of the research to our own practice, experience and research, and enables assessment of the quality of the research itself. In other words, when the researcher role is made transparent, readers of the research can consider how persuasive and useful it is for them, and how they might use it. This, along with evidence of a study's solid

theoretical and substantiated foundations, enhances its quality and plays a significant role in the EJQRP's editorial team's decision-making about submitted manuscripts.

As qualitative researchers with particular interests in humanness in psychotherapeutic practice and research, it seems important therefore that we recognise and consider the debates and discussions about the use of non-human technology in research. For years, many people may have used technological tools for grammar and spelling checks in their write ups. They help to reduce errors that can change meanings in text, and avoid breaking the flow of the writing. As journal editors and reviewers, we do look for error-free and clear writing in submitted manuscripts, so tools that can help with error reduction can offer an efficient way to improve writing style, aid writers writing in a second language, and support writers who have additional needs. Clear, coherent and error-free writing benefits research because it enables readers to consider more fully, and consider utilising, the research being reported. However, the release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in 2022 has broadened the technological landscape in ways that go beyond making suggestions to improve text, to generating and summarising research ideas, to writing the text itself.

GenAI offers several advantages for academic research, including faster literature exploration, assistance with brainstorming research ideas, and support in drafting and editing academic text, all of which can improve clarity and efficiency. It can also help with managing large datasets, saving time in transcribing interviews, and generating new insights for consideration in analysis (Foley et al, 2025). Using GenAI for interview transcription can give researchers more time to explore and analyse the text. It can be used also to command various tones and styles in text when writing up research for different audiences.

However, its use comes with some risks: GenAI may produce inaccurate or fabricated information, lack reliable source attribution, and reflect biases present in its training data. Overreliance on AI can also undermine critical thinking and raise concerns about academic integrity, especially where guidelines are unclear or restrictive. Therefore, while GenAI can be a valuable support tool in academic research, it should be used cautiously, transparently, and in conjunction with rigorous human judgment and verified sources.

Researchers carrying out literature reviews in preparation for research, can use GenAI to help start to refine their research focus so that the time saved can be put to use in reading source material and following up references they find there.

The potential benefits and limitations of using GenAI in academic research therefore presents different considerations. On the one hand, there is the risk of losing the human in research and research writing. Jowsey, Braun, Clarke, Lupton, Fine and 414 other researchers in a recent communication to SSRN (2025) argue against the use of AI in reflexive qualitative analysis for this reason. On the other hand however, Friese argues that reflexivity is not performed in isolation and therefore there can be inclusion of GenAI *alongside* humans (Friese, 2025). Foley et al. (2025) found that GenAI raises questions amongst researchers about the status and ownership of data but also that it may help in highlighting nuances that might otherwise be missed (Foley, Dempsey, O'Sullivan & Frost, 2025).

It seems then that there is potential to carefully lean on GenAI to help with some aspects of research whilst also ensuring human involvement, with it and with what is done with it. This may be, for example, by personally engaging with interviews transcribed using AI, ensuring AI is not the sole interpreter of data, and importantly to EJQRP, writing up the qualitative research so that the human (and perhaps the machine?) remains visible. The key however, seems to be not to utilise GenAI as a replacement for human interaction with the research.

Whether one accepts that AI is now available to, and part of, many aspects of daily lives and academia, utilises it, or rages against it, as researchers we have to address questions about its use, its meaning-making capability and whether it can have a role in reflexive analytical work. As journal editors and manuscript reviewers we are increasingly alert to how GenAI can manifest in written text, and what that means for how we understand the research we are reviewing. We are learning to distinguish between what is human-made and what is machine-made, and importantly, looking for ever more transparency in how analysis has been done and data interpretation made in the research submitted to EJQRP. Rather than deny or forbid the use of GenAI in research submitted to EJQRP, we now ask for a statement on whether and how it has been used. This helps us to carry out an insightful and fair

consideration of the suitability of the manuscript for potential publication.

I have included a paragraph above that has been AI generated. Can you spot it? How does it stand out? What is the importance of this to the meaning of the whole piece? How does it add to or detract from the coherence of the writing overall?

And so to the papers in this Issue, which to the best of our knowledge are human both in the research they are presenting and the writing-up of that research!

The Issue opens with an in depth exploration of the relational dynamics between therapist and client during alliance ruptures and repairs by **Patrik Karlsson-Söderström and Rolf Holmqvist**. Through the lens of self-definition and relatedness, IPA analysis of data from interviews with therapists about their needs and expressions of self-definition and relatedness during processes of rupture and repair is theorised. The research shows that ruptures between the therapist and the client developed from imbalances in their needs of relatedness. In turn this imbalance was expressed with behaviors that conveyed needs of self-definition. Once therapist-client negotiations over self-definition issues had come to an end, renewed and more mutual relatedness could be achieved.

The next paper by **Daniel Robinson** zooms out from the focus on the therapeutic relationship to explore the therapist's practice environment (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQKrtgMGzmY> for Abstract). It specifically asks why therapists choose to work in prisons and what it is like to do so. Using IPA to analyse data collected from therapists who have worked in UK prisons, this study identified a draw to working with prisoners, the therapists' need to adapt to working in the prison environment, and their felt sense of empathy towards their clients. The paper highlights systematic changes to improve the very human experiences of both therapists and their clients in the prison environment.

Whilst IPA is a commonly used method in psychotherapy research, innovative creative methods are also widely used in psychotherapy research. The next papers detail and reflect on two.

Elizabeth Peel presents a commentary focussing on being an experienced qualitative researcher conducting

psychotherapy research as a novice practitioner (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCFFCizlwfs> for Abstract). She explores the juxtaposition of insider-outsider positions by drawing on a feminist phronetic approach. This approach draws on practical wisdom, good judgement, and ethical deliberation to make and implement decisions. In so doing, the importance of reflecting on the research process and elucidating advantages and disadvantages of qualitative survey methods for psychotherapy research, arguably places the humanness of the novice researcher at the centre of the study.

In a second reflective methodological piece, **Krystal Scott** shows how the poetry formed from participants' words can be used to provide support in creating intricate representations of human life and experience, and offers the potential to recognise the engagement of the researcher with the data. Once again, the value of the human researcher is foregrounded, as the study draws on accounts from person-centred therapists who work with primary-aged children in school-based counselling services to highlight the nuances of lived experience.

The remaining papers examine the most human of relationships, parenting, from different perspectives.

Helen Davies' paper explores the experience of maternal transition – matrescence – so that understanding of the many changes undergone during and following pregnancy can be better understood by mothers and those who support them (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUMA98-XM70> for Abstract). Using genogram construction, semi-structured interviews, and a uniquely human activity of working with clay, participants described and expressed their expectations and realities of becoming mothers. Knowledge of components of matrescence such as multi-dimensional and ongoing adjustment, existential mattering, relational shifts in identity, and preparing to be unprepared, enables mothers to have greater insight to their maternal transition and professionals to consider practice, interventions and policy development for those undergoing this life transition.

Staying with parents, the next paper by **Joanna Griffin** explores how professionals can support the emotional wellbeing of parents of a child with a learning disability or autism. Although there is evidence that parent

carers of children with a learning disability or autism are at higher risk of poorer mental health few studies have asked them what they would find helpful to support them. Information for practitioners is also scarce. This study explored wellbeing with parent carers and used template analysis to develop themes from their accounts. Along with identifying themes of relationships with others, protecting their sense of self, and managing the ongoing emotional rollercoaster practical ways in which professionals can support parent carers, such as flexibility in support and providing a safe reflective space, were described.

The final two papers focus on ways of working with families. Both include professionals and parents in the studies The first paper describes the experiences of the use of Open Dialogue to support a person at the Centre of Concern (PCC). The second paper explores the adaptation of Emotion Focused Skills Training for Parents (EFST) to an online and culturally inclusive format (EFST-O).

Open Dialogue is a collaborative, continuous, and outpatient-oriented intervention approach to mental health support that is rooted in family therapy and dialogical philosophy. It includes the PCC, their family and professionals in treatment planning throughout the therapeutic process and aims to foster joint decision-making and mutual understanding of the PCC's needs, with the aim of prioritizing community care over hospitalization. **Ferreira, Simões de Almeida, Villares and Pereira** explored how this approach is experienced by PCCs, their families and professionals in a Portuguese Psychosocial Rehabilitation Unit. Participants described how they valued the flexibility, immediacy of help, and acceptance of uncertainty, but also that challenges lay in resistance to change, and cultural adaptation of the approach.

An innovative exploratory study used reflexive thematic analysis of feedback on video lectures to parent participants to contrast insights with researcher fieldnotes and feedback from psychotherapist observers on the experiences of adapting Emotion Focused Skills Training for Parents to an online and culturally inclusive format for expat and Norwegian families (EFST-O). **Lehmann, Markova, Ness and Berg Kårstad** found that participants experienced the EFST-O program as helpful and inclusive, and wished for more interaction with other peers. They expressed a need to learn more about parenting and to receive

additional support. Participants described increased awareness and knowledge about emotions and relationships, but for some families, culture and couple relationships could have been more emphasized. A deeper understanding around self-disclosure was gained and it was found that the facilitator's self-disclosure impacted the group dynamics.

Together and individually these papers offer moving and meaningful insight to human experience. I hope you enjoy them and find them interesting and useful.

Thank you to Reviewers

The EJQRP could not function without the valuable and freely given time of the manuscript peer reviewers. Although often an enjoyable and rewarding job it is still an additional task to the many others that everyone is juggling. The comments, suggestions made, and feedback given however is crucial in aiding, and often leading, our editorial decisions about manuscripts submitted, and we are greatly appreciative of this help. A huge thank you to all our reviewers of 2025:

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Nollaig Frost, *Editor-in-Chief*, *EJQRP* January, 2026

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