Using reflective writing within research

Melanie A. Jasper PhD, MSc, BNurs, BA, RGN, RHV, RM, PGCEA

Professor and Head of Health and Social Welfare Studies
Canterbury Christ Church University College, Canterbury

Abstract   Reflective writing has become established as a key component of reflective practice, and central to the notion of learning from experience. Claims are made in the reflective practice literature of the capacity for reflective writing to develop the writer's critical thinking and analytical abilities, contribute to their cognitive development, enable creativity and unique connections to be made between disparate sets of information, and to contribute to new perspectives being taken on issues. All of these are attributes to be expected in competent researchers. Thus, this paper considers the features of reflective writing and its use within qualitative research as a method in its own right, as a data source and within the analytical processes. It is argued that, although reflective writing is increasingly becoming visible within qualitative research reports, it needs to be further acknowledged as central to the methodological processes within research studies and recognised as an essential part of their methodology.

Keywords   reflective writing, reflective practice, research

Introduction

It would be spurious to suggest that researchers do not keep meticulous notes and logs throughout their studies in order to track the progress of their work and integrate empirical data with field notes, hunches and ideas. Yet, as Waterman (1998) observes, 'reflexive accounts of any forms of research (including nursing) are uncommon and may be perceived as irritating', although such writings make up much of the audit trail essential to research in general, and to qualitative methodologies in particular, when establishing rigour (Koch, 1994, 1996; Smith, 1999; Glaze, 2001). However, the nature of objective science demands that these logs are stripped of any subjective musings of the researcher, and indeed are located within the realm of observable, justifiable, and measurable criteria. The nature of audit trails within qualitative work tends to be different however, with the subjective

and personal contributions of the researcher, the capability of the researcher to put themselves into the research process and the explicit acknowledgement of themselves as an active part of the study, demanding a very different sort of log-writing to that traditionally used. The premise of this paper is that the use of reflective writing within the qualitative research process offers a method for not only contributing to the trustworthiness of a research study, but that in itself offers techniques to facilitate creativity, critical thinking and strategies for analysis and innovative discovery.

Reflective practice is perceived by many as being in opposition to the approach of evidence-based practice in that it can contend with the realities of the everyday life-world of practice and the practitioner (Schon, 1983; Johns and Freshwater, 1998, Rolfe et al., 2001). Within both nursing and education literature there is little debate regarding the notion that reflection on experience contributes to understanding and learning about practice (Boyd and Fales, 1983; Platzer et al., 1997; Kember et al., 2001; Bulman and Schutz, 2004). Summarising this school of thought are Scanlon et al. (2002: 137) who suggest that 'reflection enables practitioners to tap into knowledge gained through experiences. The practitioner gains a deeper understanding of the meaning of the experience by bringing to consciousness tacit knowledge.' There is now a significant body of academic writing identifying the skills and attributes claimed to be developed as a result of reflective practice and reflective writing strategies in terms of learning which largely arises from work with students and/or practitioners undergoing further educational preparation. Contributions to this also come from work with experienced practitioners (for example, Johns, 2000; Charon, 2001; Rolfe et al., 2001; Bolton, 2001).

However, the approaches of reflective practice are not without their critics. Taylor (2003), Cotton (2001) and Hannigan (2001), amongst others, outline the grounds for scepticism in terms of the claims for reflective practice including debate about the boundaries between clinical supervision, reflective practice and therapy (Rolfe et al., 2001; Begat and Severinsson, 2001); the ethical problems in relation to confidentiality, poor practice (Hannigan, 2000), the 'confessional nature' and 'surveillance' of practitioners (Gilbert, 2001) and power relationships (Cotton, 2001); problems relating to the production of reflective accounts in terms of anxiety, inaccurate recall, hindsight bias (Jones, 1995) and poor memory; and potential for superficial learning (Greenwood, 1998) or lack of acceptance for responsibility for their learning (Glaze, 2002). These, however, tend to be acknowledgements of challenging issues, as opposed to reasons why the approaches should not be used. They also apply to reflection on experiences in practice, as opposed to reflection that may occur as a part of the research process, which brings a different set of challenges in terms of rigour, authenticity, subjectivity and methodology.

Platzer et al. (1997) drew attention to the scarcity of published work addressing writing techniques within reflective practice. Certainly, much of the early work promoting reflective practice appeared to make the assumption that writing was a natural attribute and concentrated on the production of reflective models and frameworks, and verbal, interactive techniques. Latterly, more has been written, particularly in relation to journal and log writing, with some authors addressing the attributes of reflective writing *per se* (Allen et al., 1989; Sorrell and Metcalf, 1998; Bolton, 2001; Rolfe et al., 2001; Jasper, 2003, 2004). These texts draw attention to the processes and outcomes of writing as a way of learning, and the skills and attributes that engagement in reflective writing may develop as a result. These texts have made valuable contributions to the debate about the use of reflective techniques that provide further understanding of writing as a method of enquiry within research.

If, then, we accept the potential of reflective writing as an attribute of reflective practice to be transformative in nature (Glaze, 2001) (particularly in terms of knowledge generation from the exploration of practice, the development of analytical and critical thinking and the potential for creativity and connecting disparate ideas (Jasper, 1999, 2004) it behoves us to consider it as a deliberative strategy to enhance the research process as these are the same attributes we would expect from our researchers.

Taylor (2003: 244) suggests that 'reflective practice tends to adopt a naïve or romantic realist position and fails to acknowledge the ways in which reflective accounts construct the world of practice'. This draws attention to the fact that there is no one objective reality, that any presentation is a construction of that reality according to the writer. Whilst this may be a problem for reflective practice, it can be seen as an asset for the use of reflective writing in research, in that it makes visible the vision and stance of the researcher, which might otherwise be hidden.

It is not my intention here to resort to exploration of the philosophical roots of the notions of reflexivity, as this has been effectively presented by others (see Koch, 1996; Smith, 1999), particularly in relation to phenomenology, hermeneutic enquiry and the thoughts of Heidegger (1962), Gadamer (1975, 1976) and Ricoeur (1981). My intention is to consider the features of reflective writing as proposed within the literature, and to attempt to extrapolate from these claims the application to processes and procedures within qualitative methodologies. My stance, as a qualitative researcher myself, is that reflective writing as a method in itself, as a data source and within the analytical processes, can be used as a technique within the philosophical and theoretical framework adopted by researchers, and that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the methods used within these are true to these frameworks.

The nature of reflective writing

In this section, I want to consider the attributes of reflective writing (Jasper, 2003) that render it appropriate for use as a method in qualitative research.

Writing in the first person

Reflective writing is, by its very nature, written in the first person, and is therefore essentially subjective. It acknowledges at the outset that what is presented is that relating and purporting to the experiences and perceptions of the author. As Rolfe (1997: 448) says:

> These 'elements' of what I know are, in a way, the dismembered parts of my unique body of knowledge [about action research]. I carry them all in my memory, but it is impossible (at least for *my* brain) to consider them all at the same time. It is only when I write them down that I can pull them together into a coherent body of knowledge and come to recognise the totality of what I know [about action research].
>
> (Author's italics, my square brackets)

Rolfe is suggesting that, for any individual, their 'unique' body of knowledge can only be accessed by writing. This infers that there is something about the process(es) of writing that enables us to re-order everything we know into infinite combinations. Writing in the first person acknowledges the centrality of the writer, writing *reflexively*[1] cultivates a self-awareness and promotes 'an internal dialogue for analysing and understanding important issues in the research project' (Smith, 1999: 360). This ownership and focus on subjectivity — the owning of thoughts, feelings and emotions, owning the outcomes of the process — may lead to action, or a change in behaviour when set within a reflective practice framework. Thus, in reflective *practice* the purpose of reflective writing is *learning* which will precipitate some form of action or change in behaviour. In *research*, reflective writing acknowledges the subjective nature of the researcher's interaction and interpretation of the data, providing the decision-trail within the public domain (see Koch, 1996, for example) and transparency of the processes leading to conclusions being presented. Thus, in research, the purpose of reflective writing is to facilitate the researcher's *discovery* and provide a verifiable *audit-trail* of the research process.

Charon (2001: 1898) suggests that 'narrative knowledge is what one uses to understand the meaning and significance of stories through cognitive, symbolic, and affective means' within what she calls 'narrative medicine'. This narrative knowledge, or knowledge arising from reflective writing, leads to local and particular understandings about one situation by one participant or observer, and attempts to illuminate the universally true by revealing the particular — thus it is inductive in nature, a feature

central to qualitative methodologies in general. This then creates the link from the very personal and individual nature of reflective writing, to the public process of disseminating findings to the wider world. Once reflective writing has enabled the creativity of the researcher, once hunches and ideas have been worked through and substantiated, the researcher can have a certain degree of confidence in sharing these in a public forum, knowing they have the evidence and audit-trail as back up.

Developing understanding — developing cognitive skills and critical thinking

Boyd and Fales (1983: 100) suggest that

> reflective learning is the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective.

Writing has recently been perceived as a way that 'learning' (or change in conceptual perspective) is achieved by developing thinking, and knowing is 'shaped, moulded and understood' (Usher et al., 1999: 8). Work by Allen et al. (1989) identified features of the 'writing-to-learn' paradigm, inherent to the way that writing works to develop thinking through active engagement in the process as opposed to writing as outcome. As Van Manen (1990: 125) states: 'writing creates the cognitive stance that generally characterises the theoretical attitude in social sciences.' Hence, the processes involved in writing appear to mirror those required in analytical thinking and cognitive development — writing thus offers a medium for practising and honing those skills.

Central to this is the link between reflective writing and the development of critical thinking[2] (Fonteyn and Cahill, 1998; Jasper, 1999; Usher et al., 1999; Cise et al., 2004), with Callister (1990) suggesting that reflective writing enhances higher-level conceptual skills through the process of developing understanding. Writing enables a 'repertoire of thinking skills and strategies that, coupled with skill in metacognition,[3] will both enhance (their) ability to solve problems and dilemmas as well as increase (their) inquisitiveness and motivation to acquire new knowledge and cognitive skills' (Fonteyn and Cahill, 1998: 151).

The processes that underpin reflective writing, or the pragmatics of writing, facilitate the development of these cognitive and critical skills. Writing of any sort involves framing the reasons for which we are writing, and defining its parameters. We always write for a purpose — this enables us to focus on what is to be included, and exclude what is extraneous. In research this is crucial in following up leads and tracking ideas, thus imposing a discipline to our writing.

Similarly, writing involves ordering our thoughts in some way, or re-ordering them to rearrange the components in a different way — often leading to a different focus or perspective. This imposes a hierarchy on the content of our writing, as well as creating a permanent record that can be returned to and contemplated. This hierarchy is not a natural hierarchy — it is a function of the thought processes of the writer, and thus an indication of the way they are thinking about the issue at hand. On another day, at another time, this hierarchy could, or would, be different. A succession of these 'writings' can build into a variety of perspectives, each, in their own way, offering a view of the subject or idea as the writer works with and interacts with the data, their own thought processes and the hunches and intuitive ideas that emerge.

Another benefit of committing all analytical processes to paper is that they remain — once an idea is written down it begs to be developed and considered, or rationalised and discarded. Either way, it is difficult to avoid contradictory material on elements if it has been committed to paper (or screen!), thus helping us to work these through in a coherent way.

These will all contribute to the development of critical thinking skills, identified by Brookfield (1987) as identifying and challenging assumptions; recognising the importance of context; exploring and imagining alternatives, and reflective scepticism. All of these are required skills of a researcher, and can be seen as a framework for interrogating reflective writing and used to enable researchers to become critical thinkers when self-assessing and evaluating their own work.

Making connections and facilitating creativity

Central to critical thinking is making connections — the ability to move beyond isolated events and develop a more holistic perspective (Fonteyn and Cahill, 1998: 149), establishing linkages between theory, research and practice (Callister, 1990), and discover new and unique combinations previously unthought of.

The notion of metacognition incorporates such facilities as exploring practice in relation to theory (Burton, 2000; Rolfe et al., 2001; Scanlon et al., 2002), to create 'practice theory' (Rolfe et al., 2001), and make connections arising from experiences in the field environment (Koch, 1996; Smith, 1999; Glaze, 2001). This ability to combine or incorporate disparate elements in creative endeavour is exactly what we are expecting of researchers, particularly those in the qualitative field who are attempting to uncover and make explicit previously unknown or unexplored phenomena. Reflective writing, as a technique in its own right, enables the researcher to draw together and express fledgling ideas and connections and build these as they become more substantial. Scanlon et al. (2002:

143) suggest that 'the process of studying our own use of reflection allowed us to step outside the performance treadmill to understand better, accept and reshape what we do over and over again'. As Koch (1986), Glaze (2001) and Smith (1999) describe, this enables them to trace the development of their concepts, categories and themes, including the formulation of them into a descriptive whole or a theoretical structure. The evidence provided within this reflective log (journal, diary, etc.) is therefore no less substantial than the primary data.

Part of this process involves a form of dialogue with oneself, using the techniques of critical analysis, thinking and reflection, prior to opening one's work to the public gaze. This dialogue involves an important feature of reflection-on-action — that of creating a distance between the event itself and the analysis and reflection on it, leading to reconstruction, rethinking and interpretation (Usher et al., 1999; Scanlon et al., 2003). This is part of the process of coming to a different perspective, and in some ways guards against some of the problems with reflective work identified earlier.

In this section I have drawn attention to the features of reflective writing and attempted to establish their appropriateness to researchers' attributes needed for qualitative research. To some extent, this has established the use of reflective writing as a method. In the following sections I wish to consider how reflective writing can be used within stages of the research process itself.

Reflective writing as data

The use of reflective writing as data tends to fall into two categories. First is the use of the products of reflective writing, such as autobiographies, journals and logs, critical incident analyses, reflective reviews, etc. as primary data (e.g. Usher et al., 1999; Watson and Wilcox, 2000; Brady et al., 2002; Scanlon et al., 2002). I do not intend to explore this use in-depth, as narrative and self-reflective written accounts, that are then analysed and interpreted by the researcher, are a well-established data source in qualitative work.

Second, is the reflective writing of researchers themselves, which can be seen as secondary data (although many would argue that this is indeed also primary data), providing a commentary on both the primary data of the study and being integral to the research processes (e.g. Koch, 1996; Smith, 1999). These may consist of field notes, but to be considered as *reflective* need to incorporate reflection-on-action (Schon, 1983) involving the writer interacting with and interpreting the data and recording their analytical processes. This may include hunches and insights, and reference to other data sources, as well as feelings, dialogue with themselves and

the suggestion and testing of ideas as the process of writing enables creativity and connections to be made. These are more likely to be presented as logs or reflective journals created as part of the research process and integral to it. Taylor (2003: 246) suggests 'treating reflective accounts as examples of "case-talk", and exploring the way in which they are constructed and to what purpose, is a fruitful way of troubling these taken-for-granted assumptions.'

Koch (1996: 178) summarises this when saying:

> The daily journal is essential in recording the way in which my horizon is working. I support the notion that credibility is enhanced when researchers describe and interpret their experiences as researchers.

Whilst Smith (1999: 360) explicitly states:

> The significance of my written reflections on my own feelings and reactions to this sensitive topic and on interactions with the study's participants is explored, with special attention to their influence on the ethical and methodologic rigour of the study. Extracts from the journal create an audit trail of my reasoning, judgement and emotional reactions to the sometimes distressing stories related by participants.

It is this type of material that in the past may not have been valued as 'hard' data within empirical methodologies (although in some ways it has always had a place within ethnographic methods as recorded observations and descriptive accounts. These may or may not have included a subjective element). In many ways, these written records provide another source of data for use within every study, to be considered as data in their own right and used to supplement primary data from other sources (Koch, 1996; Glaze, 2001). Moreover, Smith (1999: 362) suggests that 'researchers' reflexive journals indicate wider, previously hidden contexts in the form of their own and their participants' reflections' that contribute to the trustworthiness of the findings.

In being acknowledged as what they are — the thoughts and processes of the researcher in terms of interpreting and interacting with the data, reflective writings overcome the problem identified by Taylor (2003) of reflective practitioners claiming to understand or to 'know' what others feel or think (for instance, see Brady et al., 2002). This can be seen as a major criticism of approaches to reflective practice which ask the reflector to describe the emotions of others, or state how they were feeling (Johns, 2000; Taylor and White, 2001). As Taylor (2003: 246) goes on to say: 'whereas the RP literature does seem to assume that it can speak on behalf of the patient, it might be preferable to claim to give voice solely to the practitioner and accept that a version of the patient is being created, and one which the patient might dispute.' Similarly is what Lather (1993)

calls the 'crisis of representation', i.e. the tension between the researcher 'knowing' what they know as a result of data collection and analysis of that data, and being able to represent this fully knowing that it is fluid and can be reinterpreted at any stage (Waterman, 1998). These, surely, are the crux of interpretative methodologies, and any strategies that can be employed to work towards authenticity in interpretation and acknowledge the unique perspective of the researcher will aid transparency of the processes by which conclusions have been reached. Whilst few qualitative researchers will claim generalisability of their findings, the issue of transferability is pertinent in terms of providing sufficient information to the reader for them to be able to judge for themselves whether findings may be appropriate for alternative settings.

Analysing reflective writing

Within reflective practice, the practitioner is engaged in reflecting on their own agency and participation in an event, for their owned defined purpose. Whilst they may impute motive, emotion, feelings, intention, etc. onto others, it is actually not important whether these were indeed 'true', as it is the outcome for the reflector that is significant. This is in contrast to the outcomes for a researcher, however, in that researchers are exploring a specific phenomena in order to answer research questions. These will be made public and disseminated to a wider audience. The purpose of reflective writing in this case, in addition to creating data, is to work through conclusions reached, testing alternatives against other sources of data (See Koch, 1996, for a discussion of 'co-constitution' and 'the fusion of horizons'). This, then, is core to the analytical process, and may occur concurrently with other forms of data generation.

Hence, the analysis of reflective writing can be approached in the same ways as any other narrative data. This may involve structured content analysis techniques, such as those employed in grounded theory or some phenomenological approaches; or as Koch (1996: 181) describes, a more eclectic, holistic approach may be adopted:

> Patients' stories and exemplars merge with contextual data, and literature is progressively incorporated to mediate understanding and delivered in a construction. I discuss my experience in making data in a decision trail in journal data where I have made my concerns and position clear. The point is that my background and these journal data ultimately influence the analysis of the interview data.

What is key here is the need to triangulate all data types within the process of constructing understanding, therefore enhancing credibility (Scanlon et al., 2002). Reflective writing generates more data, but that

data contains the researcher's interpretation within their own cultural, social and experiential parameters, including their pre-understanding of the topic. These all serve to focus the researcher's analytical lens to provide a unique analysis of the total data set.

It is crucial, therefore, that the researcher engages in reflexivity — a reflexive stance in which biases or prejudices are brought to the fore and analysed in order to understand the researchers' influences on the project that will enable them to make a decision of the appropriateness of their influence (Waterman, 1998). Reflexivity involves both interaction with the data, and a standing back in order to consider the data against external criteria, the possibility of preconceptions and other influences affecting their analysis. This provides another 'layer' to the analytical process, and helps to ensure that the researcher's use of a decision trail addresses both internal and external concerns relating to the project. Waterman (1998) however cautions against over-reflexivity and the problems of infinite regression. Working with others, such as co-researchers and research supervisors, giving them access to the audit trail and reflective logs, builds in a safeguard whereby these problems can be brought to the attention of the researcher.

Issues of rigour

In qualitative terms, issues of rigour tend to refer to the trustworthiness of the study (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Sandelowski, 1986) expressed in such attributes as credibility, dependability and transferability. How can we measure reflective writing against these? In providing an auditable record of the research process, the use of reflective writing provides a mechanism that can be examined against these external criteria. Trustworthiness is enhanced when researchers describe and interpret their experiences, and identify the events, influences and actions influencing their research — thus acknowledging their own centrality to the research process. Taken as another data source, reflective writing can provide this evidence, contributing to the legitimacy of the knowledge claims being asserted by the researcher.

Dependability incorporates the notion of 'truthfulness', or how believable the study's results can be judged to be. Thus dependability can be judged by the presentation of an audit trail, and clear indications of procedural steps. This may be referred to external audit (Koch, 1994) for verification. Hence, reflective writing provides transparency of process, as well as the subjective role of the researcher and how issues relating to this have been addressed, for those assessing the study, enabling them to judge the value of the findings for themselves. As Koch (1996: 180) says: 'the responsibility lies with the researcher to show the way in which a study attempts to address rigour. It is for the reader to decide if the study

is believable.'

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this paper that researchers' reflective writing is central to the research process and therefore needs to be incorporated into any study as a data source and to be considered as central to establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. It is clear from published nursing research in the past decade that criteria for establishing rigour in qualitative work are moving (or have already moved) from those accepted as measures of validity and reliability in the quantitative paradigm. The centrality of the role of the researcher to qualitative studies is paramount — reflective writing within journals and research logs establishes that centrality and often contains the clues to the creativity and interpretation within the work that discovers and describes new understandings of people's experiences. The researcher's reflections on the issues that challenge the credibility of the research provide safeguards against intimations of bias, over-involvement and vested interest. On the contrary, within the paradigm, the researcher needs to be involved and committed to their work, yet present to the world the ways in which this was integral to the study and managed. Many journals are now accepting the differences between presenting quantitative and qualitative work (although many would still argue that the criteria should be the same whatever the paradigm) and we see much more attention given to the description of the research process of qualitative work, integrated with the use of the researcher's reflective writing as data as a way of establishing rigour within the study. The researcher's reflective writing is crucial to demonstrating their stance and integrity, and warrants, I would argue, a more central place (and expectation) in the presentation of qualitative work.

Key points

- Reflective writing and record keeping are mainstream tools within qualitative research, but are only latterly being acknowledged as a data source within studies, or as significant within the methodological processes.
- Yet, reflective writing encourages the development of critical analysis and critical thinking skills crucial to good qualitative research, and provides a tangible and concrete audit trail of the researcher's processes.

> • Researchers need to be encouraged to include data and evidence from their reflective writing as essential components when disseminating their research to ensure that key processes and connections remain central to the knowledge generation process.

Notes

1 Where reflexivity is seen as the ability to critically examine and use previous experience to influence further action (Paterson, 1994).
2 'Critical thinking' is defined as 'the process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgement: an interactive, reflective reasoning process' (Facione et al., 1994: 345, cited by Jasper, 2003: 148).
3 'Metacognition' is defined in this instance as 'that body of knowledge and understanding that reflects on cognition itself. That mental activity for which other mental states or processes become the object of reflection' (Yussen, 1985: 253 cited by Fonteyn and Cahill, 1998).

References

Allen, D.G., Bowers, B., Diekelmann, N. (1989) Writing to learn: reconceptualization of thinking and writing in nursing curriculum. *Journal of Nursing Education* **28**: 6–11.

Begat, I.B.E., Severinsson, E.I. (2001) Nurses' reflection on episodes occurring during their provision of care — an interview study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies* **38**:1, 71–77.

Bolton, G. (2001) *Reflective Practice — Writing and Professional Development.* London: Paul Chapmen Publishing.

Boyd, E.M., Fales, A.W. (1983) Reflective learning: the key to learning from experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* **23**: 99–117.

Brady, D.W., Corbie-Smith, G., Branch, W.T. (2002) 'What's important to you?': the use of narratives to promote self-reflection and to understand the experiences of medical residents. *Annuls of Internal Medicine* **137**:3, 220–223.

Brookfield, S.D. (1987) *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bulman, C., Schutz, S. (eds) (2004) *Reflective Practice in Nursing.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Burton, A.J. (2000) Reflection: nursing's practice and education panacea. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **31**: 1009–1017.

Callister, M. (1990) The use of student journals in nursing education: making meaning out of clinical experience. *Journal of Nursing Education* **32**:4, 185–186.

Charon, R. (2001) Narrative medicine: a model for empathy, reflection, profession, and trust. *Journal of the American Medical Association* **286**:15, 1897–1902.

Cise, J.S., Wilson, C.S., Thie, M.J. (2004) A qualitative tool for critical thinking skill development. *Nurse Educator* **29**:4, 147–151.

Cotton, A.H. (2001) Private thoughts in public spheres: issues in reflection and reflective practice. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **36**:4, 512–519.

Facione, N.C., Facione, P.A., Sanchez, C.A. (1998) Critical thinking disposition as a measure of competent clinical judgement: the development of the California Thinking Disposition Inventory. *Nurse Education Today* **18**:281–292.

Fonteyn, M.E., Cahill, M. (1998) The use of clinical logs to improve nursing students' metacognition: a pilot study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **28**:1, 149–154.

Gadamer, H.G. (1975) *Truth and Method.* New York: Seabury.

Gadamer, H.G. (1976) *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Linge, D., ed.), London: University of California Press.

Gilbert, T. (2001) Reflective practice and clinical supervision: meticulous rituals of the confessional. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **36**:2, 199–205.

Glaze, J.E. (2001) Reflection as a transforming process: student advanced nurse practitioners' experiences of developing reflective skills as part of an MSc programme. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **34**:5, 639–647.

Glaze, J.E. (2002) Stages in coming to terms with reflection: student advanced nurse practitioners' perceptions of their reflective journeys. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **37**:3, 265–272.

Greenwood, J. (1998) The role of reflection in single and double loop learning. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **27**: 1048–1053.

Guba, E.G., Lincoln, Y.S. (1985) *Effective Evaluation. Improving the Usefulness of Evaluation. Results Through Responses and Naturalistic Approaches.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Hannigan, B. (2001) A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of 'reflection' in nursing practice and education. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* **10**: 278–283.

Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time* (translated by Macquarie, J. and Robinson, E. Basil) Oxford: Blackwell.

Jasper, M. (1999) Nurses' perceptions of the value of written reflection. *Nurse Education Today* **19**: 452–463.

Jasper, M. (2003) *Beginning Reflective Practice.* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.

Jasper, M. (2004) Using journals and diaries within reflective practice. In: Bulman, C., Schutz, S. (eds) *Reflective Practice in Nursing*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 94–112.

Johns, C. (2000) *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner.* Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Johns, C., Freshwater, D. (1998) *Transforming Nursing Through Reflective Practice.* Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Jones, P.R. (1995) Hindsight bias in reflective practice: an empirical investigation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **21**: 783–788.

Kember, D. et al. (2001) *Reflective Teaching and Learning in the Health Professions.* Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Koch, T. (1994) Rigour in qualitative research: the decision trail. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **19**: 976–986.

Koch, T. (1996) Implementation of a hermeneutic inquiry in nursing: philosophy, rigour and representation. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **24**:1, 174–184.

Lather, P. (1993) A fertile obsession: validity after post-structuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly* **34**:4, 673–693.

Paterson, B. (1994) A framework to identify reactivity in qualitative research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* **16**:3, 301–316.

Platzer, H., Snelling, J., Blake, D. (1997) Promoting reflective practitioners in nursing: a review of theoretical models and research into the use of diaries and journals to facilitate reflection. *Teaching in Higher Education* **2**:2, 103–121.

Ricoeur, P. (1981) *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Thompson, J., ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rolfe, G. (1997) Writing ourselves: creating knowledge in a postmodern world. *Nurse Education Today* **17**: 442–448.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., Jasper, M. (2001) *Critical Reflection for Nursing and the Helping Professions: a User's Guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Sandelowski, M. (1986) The problem of rigor in qualitative research. *Advances in Nursing Science* **8**: 27–37.

Scanlon, J.M., Care, W.D., Udod, S. (2002) Unravelling the unknowns of reflection in classroom teaching. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **38**:2, 136–143.

Schon, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*. London: Temple Smith.

Smith, B.A. (1999) Ethical and methodologic benefits of using a reflexive journal in hermeneutic–phenomenologic research. *Image — the Journal of Nursing Scholarship* **31**:4, 359–363.

Sorrell, J.M., Metcalf, J. (1998) Nurses as writers. *Nursing Connections* **11**:2, 24–32.

Taylor, C. (2003) Narrating practice: reflective accounts and the textual construction of reality. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **42**:3, 244–251.

Taylor, C., White, S. (2001) Knowledge, truth and reflexivity: the problem of judgement in social work. *Journal of Social Work* **1**: 37–59.

Usher, K., Francis, D., Owens, J. (1999) Reflective writing: a strategy to foster critical inquiry in undergraduate nursing students. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing* **17**:1, 7–12.

Van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching Lived Experience*. Canada: Althouse Press.

Waterman, H. (1998) Embracing ambiguities and valuing ourselves: issues of validity in action research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* **28**:1, 101–105.

Watson, J., Wilcox, S. (2000) Reading for understanding: methods of reflecting on practice. *Reflective Practice* **1**: 57–67.

Yussen, S. (1985) The role of metacognition in contemporary theories of cognitive development. In Forrest-Pressby, D.L., Mackinnon, G.E., Walker, T.G. (eds) *Metacognition, Cognition and Human Performance*, volume 1, *Theoretical Perspectives*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 253–283.