Be honest – why did YOU decide to study Psychology? A recent graduate and a professor reflect

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Understanding student motivation is key to unlocking higher student satisfaction and allowing teachers to meet the expectations of their students. Psychology students have their own unique motivations. Using autoethnographic methods, a recent graduate and a professor of psychology come together to recall our own experiences from the classroom. From these, we arrive at definitions for two psychology student motivations that have stood out to us. We suggest how understanding motivations such as these can be beneficial for students and teachers alike. We discuss the benefits and limitations of using autoethnography to give our first-hand accounts, demonstrating the potential of this lesser-known methodology as a valid way to bring educational experiences into journals.

Introduction

> 'My classmates talked in seminars about the meanings of their dreams, for example, and even though they didn't yet have the words to fully convincingly show it, they were clearly looking to psychology to help them understand themselves.' (Parker, 2020, p.64).

STUDENTS have many forms of motivation for attending university. These motivations can be intrinsic (studying because it creates satisfaction and/or pleasure) or extrinsic (studying as a means to an end) (Vallerand et al., 1992). For example, intrinsic motivations include interest in a subject (Turoski & Schell, 2020) and perceived competence (Ferla et al., 2010). Extrinsic motivations might be socio-economic (Winn, 2002), career enhancement (Kember et al., 2010; Kaye & Bates, 2016) or even based on social comparisons (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Motivations are essentially founded on beliefs that our actions will have a particular outcome (Atkinson & Reitman, 1956), and as such it is important for educators to understand what it is that their students are asking of them. In terms of retention, a topic that will likely be very pertinent in the academic year of 2020/21 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (Fazackerley, 2020), it has been shown that focussing student motivation can increase retention (Hoyert et al., 2012). If student motivation plays a role in retention as this suggests, then understanding and meeting student expectations must be key for teachers. Motivation was a significant influencer of student satisfaction in Eom et al. (2006), while a literature review by Green et al. (2015) identified motivation as one of the potential moderators of student satisfaction in psychology undergraduate students.

Stewart et al. (2005) carried out an in-depth study into student motivations for pursuing a degree in psychology. In a sample of American students, the researchers carried out three phases of research to identify and then map student reasons for studying psychology. Thematic analysis of the initial interviews provided 72 statements, which were then categorised by Divisions of the American Psychological Association (2001).

Psychology major (undergraduate) students were then provided with the statements on cards, and asked to produce various rankings, which the researchers then used to create a three-dimensional map. Within this map, 10 'hotspots' indicated categories of motivation that the students had created through their rankings. These included 'school psychology', 'industrial/organisational' and 'sport/performance'. For the purposes of the present paper, the hotspots of interest are 'understand behaviour' and 'personal background'. While many caring reasons for studying psychology were identified ('work with stroke and accident victims', 'assist the victims of child abuse and domestic violence', etc), three of the listed motivations stood out to the current authors as being close to their own experiences with psychology students. 'To figure out myself, my family, my friends' was a statement that resonated as a motivation behind many people that the authors had encountered, and they had found the literature on this kind of motivation in psychology students to be lacking. 'I never received help when I was younger and I don't want others to experience the same distress' and 'have been through and benefitted from therapy and now want to help others' were similarly evocative to the authors, both identifying with them personally and knowing students who also did. These statements fit into the Jungian archetype of the 'wounded healer' (Hanrik & Zaman, 2013), those who seek to heal others as they themselves feel that they have been healed (Rippere & Williams, 1985).

This paper will look at motivation from 'on the ground'. Autoethnographic methodology is employed in the current study to give intimate accounts of interactions with students regarding what led them to psychology, with a particular focus on themes of understanding behaviours and wounded healers. Autoethnography is a way to share first-hand experiences of social groups and interactions in the form of a structured narrative. First used by sociologists to share observations from field work (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), the method has been used increasingly in psychological contexts (Hargons et al., 2017; Kracen & Baird, 2017; Mason & Reeves, 2018) as a way of legitimately sharing personal experiences of psychosocial phenomenon and other psychological observations in an academic form. The method has been used to cover many topics, from grief (Hollander, 2004; Kimmel, 2020) to sport (Schaeperkoetter, 2017; Misener, 2020). In education, autoethnography has been used as a way of teachers sharing practice (Barley & Southcott, 2019) and as a way of reflecting on practice, sharing these findings with peers through academia (Pinner, 2018; Park et al., 2019; Yazan, 2019). Autoethnography can be useful to new teachers reflecting on their first steps as educators. Soleas and Code (2020), did this by reflecting on their first years as practicing teachers, tracking their own personal development and growth, to illustrate the journeys that teachers take in their early careers. Doloriert and Sambrook (2012, p.90) called for the exploration of the 'mundane, ignored and distorted in current academic life', believing that autoethnography could bring a voice in academia to the lesser talked of concepts in teaching and other professions.

The autoethnographic method is very flexible in the forms that it can take. It has been employed in a narrative diary (Symonds LeBlanc, 2017), letters to deceased family members (Lander & Graham-Pole, 2009) and divided into the individual components of a stage model (Phipps, 2018). It has even be used to construct dialogues in order to convey the semantics of lengthy exchanges in a shorter, more digestible format. Holt (2003), used this to get across how reviewers reacted to his previous autoethnography in a succinct dialogue. Rather than detailing email exchanges with multiple reviewers, he created two archetypal reviewers, and wrote a dialogue between himself and the two reviewers at different points of the review process. While this exchange did not occur word-for-word, it is still an accurate and honest account, in that it conveys how

he experienced this process. This level of subjectivity is entirely necessary in autoethnography (Rosenblatt, 2019). As such the first-person (we/I/our, etc.) will be used throughout this article in order to allow for the intimacy necessary for this methodology. We understand that this more informal style of writing is not common practice, and may seem awkward to some readers.

The main aim of this paper is to encourage the reader to think about why they decided to study psychology. A secondary aim is to give readers insights into the discussions that take place between both students and faculty members, regarding motivations to study psychology. In this, we arrive at two categories of psychology student motivation, which will hopefully stimulate future research and provide both educators and students with a new lens with which to consider motivation. As we, the authors, believe that reflection is crucial to understanding motivation, we also provide our own stories of how we came to be involved in psychology. The motivations for studying this discipline have impacts on how we learn and how we teach.

Finally, we aim to promote the use of autoethnography within psychology. Through demonstrating the methodology, we hope to show the potential value of using autoethnography. In particular in educational psychology, we believe our teacher/student dynamic presents a novel way of approaching how the classroom can be moved into academic spaces.

Methods

The work on this paper began after a discussion over Skype, where the topic of 'wounded healers' was debated, in the context of how many students seem to conduct an undergraduate project that has relevance to their lives. Jerome observed that many students seem to be studying psychology to learn more about themselves. When Robert agreed from a student perspective, we decided to write a discursive piece on the phenomenon to stimulate further discussion. The autoethnography was written collaboratively, with each of us sharing ideas over Skype and then writing these down and sending drafts back and forth, until the account was completed. After editorial and peer-review feedback, this discursive article was given more context and adapted to an autoethnographic style.

The sample size was two. Robert, a recent graduate, who spent three years studying Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling at the University of Bolton, and Jerome, who has been professor of psychology at the University of Bolton for eight years. The students we have interacted with have also of course played a huge part in this account, though only our perceptions and observations of these individuals are noted. No identifying information is given about anybody but ourselves, in order to maintain confidentiality. We are aware that the two of us writing about our observations is a small sample, however we intend to stimulate more discussion through this account and believe that autoethnographic accounts are just as valid as any narrative-as-data account. Autoethnography was chosen over more quantitative methods, indeed over more rigorous qualitative methods, as we found that the scope that this allowed us to write with was better suited to the ideas that we wanted to convey. Autoethnography allows more freedom (Preston, 2011), which in turn allows a level of reflection usually reserved for interviewees rather than academics. Our feelings are summed up well by Wall (2008, p.45). She commented, 'If a researcher had interviewed me about my experiences […] and had recorded and transcribed it, it would have legitimacy as data despite the fact that both the interview transcript and my autoethnographic text would be based on the same set of memories.'

Indeed, we wonder if accounts coming 'straight from the horses' mouths', so to speak, are not in fact more reliable than case studies or transcribed interviews, given that they are first-hand accounts focusing exactly on the details that are deemed relevant by the narrative sharers.

It was not our intention to write these accounts while directly involved with the environment on which we are reflecting. These observations are memories and prior experiences, drawn upon after-the-fact, and not systematic analyses of encounters produced as and when they happened. Again, we acknowledge that this perhaps gives our data less scientific validity, but nevertheless, the accounts have a strong authenticity to them, and are intended to spark debate and perhaps future study. We hope that two individuals, each on different sides of the lecture hall, noting similar trends from their two different perspectives, gives some credit to the ideas that we present. To accomplish the aims of our paper, we will outline our own paths into psychology and explain the motivations within these journeys, to encourage the reader to reflect on their own path into psychology. It also demonstrates the complexity that can go into motivations for studying a particular subject, which in turn hopefully shows why we wanted to employ autoethnographic methods for this work. Our accounts bring in our experiences with fellow students/faculty to give insight into how motivation is viewed within a psychology department. Finally, from our experiences we distil two kinds of motivation within psychology students as a suggestion for reflection and for future research.

Autoethnography

Student motivation is a difficult subject to approach scientifically. Quantitative methods can be overly reductionist, giving no statistical voice to the plethora of individuals whose unique motivations do not fit into a rigid group. Qualitative approaches may not be much better. In writing this autoethnography we have grappled with our tone and approach to the subject, to avoid judgement and condescension. We would like you to bear this in mind going into this account. If anything reads disparagingly, please know that it was not meant in such a way. Between us, we have come to know many psychology students, and not one of them could be said to have an 'invalid' reason to be there in the classroom. All motivations are valid, and all of them are important, and we encourage you to reflect on your own.

We are proposing two specific kinds of motivations that psychology students have for coming into the discipline. We acknowledge the limitations of this, however we do so having noticed a number of people mention these two themes in the classroom. We will explain our motivation types (wounded healing and introspective) and give anecdotes to illustrate these. For the purposes of this autoethnography, we will be talking a lot about counselling psychology students, as these are the students we have spent the most time with. This account will include the insights and observations of both a professor and a recent graduate from the Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling pathway at the University of Bolton. But first, it is only right that we explore our own personal motivations for studying psychology.

Journeys into psychology

Robert

The caring professions have always interested me. My dream jobs as a child invariably involved occupations where I helped others, whether it be as a vet or as a doctor. As I approached the critical age of 14, the thing helping me most was the CBT therapy sessions that I was attending. I had been struggling all throughout high school with social anxiety. Everybody around me knew that I was really shy, but it had gotten to a stage where I would have to spend the first few minutes of every school lesson preparing myself to answer 'Yes' when my name was called out in the register. I was excited on days where I would wake up with a sore throat or a temperature, because I knew that it would give me a day away from the classroom and the pressures that came with it. I remember quite vividly that I did not enjoy my CBT sessions. The rapport with my counsellor was not very good, and being in the clinical environment made me feel that there was something abjectly wrong with me.

The sessions always started later than they were meant to, which frustrated me greatly. And yet, it is completely undeniable that this experience changed my life. Even before the therapy had finished, I had found myself a part of a group of friends. I was communicating with classmates, even making headway in romantic relationships. The best part for me was knowing that this power had been within me all along. I realised that my therapist had not given me some magical elixir or told me to completely change my personality. What they had done was guide me towards expressing my interests and communicating with those around me. They helped me to open my eyes to the social connections that I had already established. With this fresh in my mind while applying for my college A-level subjects, Psychology was an obvious choice. It interested me, I felt like I had a connection to the subject, and it was a more 'academic' subject to take on.

Choosing psychology as a degree was less straightforward. I felt I had lost my way somewhat with my scholarly pursuits. External pressures were making me consider whether I should bother going to university at all, and my distractions led to some relatively sub-par A-Level results. I chose my five UCAS options without knowing for sure if I would ever actually pursue them. However, when the day came to make my choice, I remember looking through all of my options. As I read 'Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling', this sparked within me my lifelong leaning towards helping people. Thinking back over my life, the professional who helped me most was a counsellor. It almost felt like I was repaying a debt, paying forward my experience so that I too could give to others what was given to me. This gave me a new desire to study at university.

From these reflections, I would say that my main motivation for beginning my psychology studies was because I wanted to help people. I want to leave a net positive effect on the world, and I see becoming a therapist or counsellor as a fantastic way to achieve this. Another factor would be the admiration that I had for the profession of 'psychologist'. While I did not really understand that this encompassed a wide range of specialisms when applying for my undergraduate course, what I did know was that all the professionals that I had met in the field of psychology were intelligent, professional, and above all – kind. My experiences in CBT showed me that human behaviour is not straight forward, that it can also be something of a riddle to understand the causes of psychological distress. This gave those psychologists whom I had met a great power in my eyes, a power for good. To this day, I find the challenge of mental health to be something that interests me, not only intellectually, but on a human level. Some people need a hand understanding why they think or feel the way that they do. I certainly did. Psychology gave me answers to these questions in the counselling office, and then once again in the classroom.

Jerome

I didn't actually think of studying psychology at University. Geography, History and Economics were the subjects I studied for A-level. I knew I was going to go to university, and I assumed I was going to read Geography. When I asked the Geography teacher, Mrs Grigor, which university she would recommend, she replied, 'Had I thought of studying something else, such as Psychology or Sociology?'. I had not. For some reason she planted a seed. I never did find out why she suggested that. In later years, I reflected that maybe she felt she had made a mistake herself in specialising in Geography. Even more speculatively, that she saw something vulnerable in me, and that Psychology might perhaps help my troubled soul. My mother had in fact died about 18 months earlier, and she probably knew this. Over the summer holiday in Ireland before going to university, I read a number of the Eysenck best sellers (e.g. 'Sense and Nonsense in Psychology,' Eysenck, 1957). I developed a mentee relationship with a teacher, turned social anthropologist, called Noel McGuigan. By the time

I arrived at Reading University I had decided to 'dump' the less scientific Sociology and to study Psychology. However, I didn't realise that for the first two terms you had to study three subjects for the First University Exams, and so chose to do Psychology, Politics and the A-level 'staple', Economics. The latter turned out to be very mathematical and my exam results suggested I could only continue to read for a full degree in either Psychology or Politics. The first two terms of Psychology had been very uninspiring. It took the persuasion of a Psychology PhD student, called Paul Davis, a fellow member of the University Karate Club, to persuade me to continue with Psychology. Looking back now after a 40-year career in clinical and academic Psychology, it was in fact a fortuitous choice, as it is a subject I came to love and still do. I soon realised that I wanted to become a clinical psychologist. After two years spent in nursing and as an assistant psychologist, I managed to achieve the coveted place on a clinical psychology training course at the then, North East London Polytechnic. My main motivation was to find a branch of psychology that really appealed to me and that I would be able to make into a career, and that was clinical.

Into the lecture theatre

Jerome

In 2012 I came home to Psychology, becoming Professor of Psychology at the University of Bolton. I had never been to Bolton before, but it was a Department with a 50-year history. Before getting University status in 2005, the Psychology Department at the Bolton Institute was said to be the best outside of the University and Polytechnic structure. Over the time I was in the Department, mental health issues in students became much more prevalent. As a young clinician I had run some Adult Education classes, which I wrote about in a paper entitled 'Out of the clinic into the classroom,' (Carson & Brewerton, 1991). Having had 32 years clinical experience in the NHS I was determined to bring the clinic into the classroom for our students, in terms of imparting my clinical experiences of having worked with hundreds of patients. I soon discovered that the clinic was already in the classroom, in that lots of our students experienced serious mental health problems. Just about every condition I saw in my time in the NHS was manifest in our students, so much so that I was able to co-author a number of first-hand accounts of living with mental illness with several of our students in a series called Remarkable Lives, (e.g. Jenkins & Carson, 2014; Insley & Carson, 2015; Cardosa Baldé & Carson, 2018; Faith & Carson, 2019; Handley & Carson, 2020). Many students are 'wounded psychologically' and some will go on to be wounded healers. Of course, I am mindful of the words of the disability rights activist Tom Shakespeare, who claimed Oliver Sacks was the neurologist who mistook his outpatient clinic for a book publishing business (Shakespeare, 1996), a pun on the title of one of Sacks' most famous books. All my work has been co-authored with students, and papers are only sent for publication once they have been approved by the student. Neither have I ever made any money out of my writing.

Robert

Due to the nature of my course, I heard a lot about the mental health struggles of my classmates. Naturally, this is not something which I will delve into in any depth, so as not to violate confidentiality. However, during practice counselling sessions, I heard what were essentially 'recovery narratives' from my peers, as they detailed troubles that they had in the past, and ones they were facing in the present. Even from getting to know straight psychology and forensic psychology students (the other two psychology pathways at Bolton, with which my course still shared a lot of modules), I know that these previous and current issues are not unique to counselling students in particular. Now, it could well be that psychology tends to attract people who are willing to share their emotions more than other subjects, but it is certainly something that was commonplace enough that

it piqued my interest. There were mature students who disclosed psychological problems that their children had, which spurred them on to want to help others. I heard stories of horrific eating disorders, of complex grief, and of suicide attempts. My classmates were very brave to share these stories. Is it the self-awareness about the processes of our minds and a willingness to talk that sets psychology students apart in this regard? Perhaps because we discuss 'abnormal psychology' so much in the classroom, it becomes normal. We can see that nobody is laughing or mocking or scared of these conditions, and maybe this allows us to feel safe enough to open up. I know myself that during abnormal psychology lectures, I've shared a few glances with friends as if to say 'that doesn't sound like me, does it?' I've seen many people in the rows in front nudging their friends too. So maybe hearing about these symptoms and case studies that match our own experiences, and seeing them written down in the lecture slides, makes us feel… understood?

This is where I would like to go back to the study by Stewart et al. (2005) which was examined in this paper's Introduction. Reading the list of motivations that the researchers devised, reminded me of so many people that I met during my undergraduate degree. Particularly striking were those motivated to study psychology to help others, and those who were looking to understand themselves and others. I believe that these two motivations can be defined as:

> **Wounded Healing** – An extrinsic motivation to study psychology in order to go and help people who suffer mental health problems, caused by the students own first or second-hand experiences with mental illness.
>
> **Introspective** – An intrinsic motivation to study psychology, in order to better understand oneself and/or others.

This is not to say that these two motivations operate in isolation. In fact, I have seen that they can both be present in the same individual. I would in fact say that these were both motivations in my own decision to study psychology. I want to use my own 'woundedness' to help others heal. I was also still looking for answers about myself when I signed up to my psychology A-level and undergraduate courses! There are definitely a lot of students that I met who either wanted to give back in terms of healing others, or wanted to find answers about themselves in the lectures, or indeed both. However, I have struggled to find sources other than Stewart et al. (2005) that talk about this desire, that many have, to use psychology courses to explore questions they have about themselves. I don't think that this is a concept that has escaped everybody but mine and Jerome's notice. This is why autoethnography was the right method to use as Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) had called for us to. We need to shine an academic light on the ignored things that happen in our classrooms, even if they seem mundane.

Jerome

I have occasionally heard negative comments made by some academics about students, such as 'They have only come into Psychology as they want find to out about themselves.' Is this a bad thing? Why did any of us decide to study Psychology? Sometimes students choose to do projects as it may help them make sense of some of their own personal life experiences. One student wanted to do a qualitative project looking at the experiences of being a teenage mother, another at how young women dealt with not having a father, another on coping with bereavement. Each of these projects directly linked to issues in the students' lives. Choosing a personally meaningful project probably serves to encourage greater engagement with the topic. This experience matches with the assertion of Crookes (2007), that students being given a choice in the topics of

their work leads to better results. There are also a number of famous clinical psychologists, who have written about their mental illnesses (Deegan, 1996; Perkins, 1999; May, 2011). There is no doubt that their experiences of mental illness have made them much better clinical psychologists and powerful advocates for people with mental health problems. Some of the students who academics might feel should not be studying Psychology, may go on to make major contributions to the discipline, or indeed to other fields such as mental health nursing or social work? Who are we to judge? On the whole, I have found the vast majority of staff to be very sensitive to student mental health needs and incredibly caring.

Robert

My experience as a psychology student who would class himself as both a 'wounded healer' and an 'introspect,' is that it is important for those at the front of the classroom to understand why all of the students are in that classroom with them. What are the experiences and desires and interests that brought them there? Beginning the course, I remember feeling something of 'imposter syndrome' creeping over me. 'I've been to therapy, can I really become a counsellor myself? Can I even be good at psychology after having some mental health problems?' The way that teaching was conducted very quickly quelled these fears, as it was made very clear that having been 'wounded' was in no way a barrier to anyone becoming a 'healer'. Indeed, it was empowering to hear stories of recovery in the classroom, both from teachers sharing recovery narratives from a wide range of people, to fellow students sharing their own stories. So, while lecturers did not know my motivations, in making it clear that wounded healers can go on to become great counsellors, they at least quelled my concerns, and hopefully those of other students who had similar motivations. Therefore, if there was a greater awareness of student motivations, lecturers may be able to do this to a greater degree.

I am very conscious that, having just identified myself as a 'wounded healer' I have not actually suffered an awful lot, relatively speaking. The same can be said of my status as an 'introspect.' I am always striving for self-improvement and new lenses through which to examine myself. However, I have met others during my studies who have been almost in crisis, and were here studying psychology in order to find out why they were struggling in their daily life and were looking for answers about themselves. I think that it is important for academics (and fellow students) be able to notice when students have these motivations, because they may need help outside of their studies. Studying psychology might not give them the answers that they are looking for. A particular conversation with a fellow student springs to mind. It was the first week of university, and as I was getting to know this person, we discovered that we had both struggled with anxiety in the past. I talked about CBT and how it had really helped me overcome my social anxiety. They hadn't had the same results and listed their own attempts at getting their anxiety under control. Three psychiatrists, two counsellors and a hypnotherapist. I of course expressed sympathy, that they hadn't managed to find something that had worked for them yet and asked what they were thinking of doing next. Their reply? 'What do you think I'm doing here?!' While I cannot speak to the therapeutic benefits this person gleaned from the course, we graduated together and they were by all accounts a wonderful student. The motivation behind the student is not a barrier to their success, but knowing it could help teachers give them what they need to flourish.

Teaching and learning

To end our autoethnography, we will reflect on how our own personal motivations have impacted the way that we learn and teach psychology. This will provide the reader with an insight as to why it is important from an

educational stance to understand motivations.

Robert

I find that the topics that I relate to the most are counselling related. I achieved my best marks in the abnormal psychology and therapeutic process modules. This matches up with what I have identified as my main motivation for studying psychology, which is to help others. Perhaps ensuring that students identify their own motivations will help them choose modules in their final year that will be the best suited to them, where they will achieve grades that reflect their skills and motivations for being on the course at all. Crookes (2007), as noted earlier, found that in many cases, students who chose their own topic of study would achieve a higher mark on that assessment. I think this could apply to modules too. An intervention could maybe be devised for teachers to implement, to help guide students through a reflection on their motivations, in order to give them an insight into where their real interests will lie, and how they can get the best out of their course.

Jerome

I have been fortunate to have been module lead at various times for Abnormal Psychology and Loss and Trauma third year modules. My years of clinical experience have been a great help in bringing these modules to life. I still have the same fascination studying these topics that I have always done. Just as this is an autoethnographic account, there have been many more first person accounts in the field of mental health, which help students understand the phenomenology of mental health problems, for instance, Jamison (1995), Brampton (2018), Saks (2008) and Chadwick (2009) to mention but a few. Indeed, one of the earliest books in the genre was published in 1976 by a Professor of Psychology, who had a bipolar disorder (Sutherland, 2010). Invariably these days, I am approached by students after the lecture or later, who want to share with me the fact, they have long-standing mental health problems. Abnormal has never been so normal!

Discussion

Findings

In our accounts, we reflected on our own journeys into psychology. Through this, we identified some of our own motivations. We then discussed what we had observed in the psychology classrooms at Bolton regarding students and why they were studying psychology. Through this, we have identified two categories of student motivation – wounded healers and introspects. While these are by no means exhaustive, we believe that these motivations are seen time and again in psychology students, and as such are worth noting. They draw upon the work Stewart et al. (2005), and we gave examples to show the theory in action. In this way, we met the aims of this paper. We also applied our reflections to how we learn and how we teach. The final aim is something that only you, the reader, can achieve for us. We want you to reflect on why you decided to study psychology.

We also believe that our account is relatively unique in the dynamic that it presents. Educational autoethnographies are nothing new, with teachers (Coia & Taylor, 2009; Elbelazi & Alharbi, 2020) and students (Peters et al., 2020) having written about their experiences in the classroom separately. However, in reading for this paper we found that student-teacher collaborative autoethnographies are less common. The closest that we found to this was Butler and Diacopoulos (2016), which was a collaboration between a teacher and a doctoral student. We hope that our account demonstrates the value of the undergraduate/professor dynamic, especially in the field of teaching and learning psychology. We see this as a valuable approach to examining classroom experiences, as it gives voice to both sides of the classroom.

Limitations

One of the primary drawbacks of this paper is that we only focus on two kinds of motivation in students. We acknowledge that this is not by any means the full picture of student motivation. However, this focus has allowed us to use the autoethnographic method to explore the ideas which we presented. These ideas are subjective. However we do not think that this makes them any less valid as observations when we acknowledge the limitations that come with the autoethnographic approach.

Autoethnography is not based on quantitative data as evidence. While we gave our own experiences as evidence, this is of course not what is usual in educational research. Another limitation is that ours are only two voices. Wouldn't it, for example, it be better to conduct a study of the views of 15 lecturers? Well, we think that could be a great idea, and we will discuss it further in the next section. We think that our use of autoethnography allows us to give two in-depth views, from two different sides of the classroom. It has allowed us more space to reflect and explore ideas than set questions or even thematic analysis would have done. We believe that this has left more in the text for the reader to potentially identify with and be inspired by to go on and investigate themselves, and isn't this ultimately the reason for all reflective academic writing? To inspire further work into the subject?

The exchanges detailed may not have taken place exactly as recounted by the authors. However, as Holt (2003) opined, accuracy of words is not as important to autoethnographic writing as the meaning in the words as it pertains to the author's feelings about the encounter.

Suggestions for future research

A key suggestion for future research would be to further explore the concepts of wounded healing and introspective motivations. We have presented these ideas based upon our experiences, and further quantitative or qualitative research would give them a scientific grounding. For example, teachers could be given an unstructured interview about what they perceive to be their students' motivations. Students could then also be interviewed, in order to assess whether the teachers' perceptions were accurate or not.

We expressed concern that some students who could be termed as introspects may face difficulties with their mental health, especially if the course isn't giving them the answers about themselves that they had hoped for. Could research examine the relationship between motivation type, expectations, and mental health?

Finally, we would like to suggest that more educational psychology autoethnographies are written. There are autoethnographic articles written in the field of education (Soleas & Code, 2020), but not many by psychology teachers/learners specifically. Jerome recently co-authored an autoethnography with Andrew Voyce on their respective psychiatric careers. His as a mental health professional, Andrew's as a mental health survivor (Voyce & Carson, 2020). Both started off at Reading University with great hopes for their future careers, but their paths diverged. They are now converging in a most unexpected way. What insights do these accounts have to offer about motivation? What could they tell us about, that is usually overlooked by studies with more rigorous methods? What diamonds may lie in 'the mundane', waiting to be uncovered?

Implications

We think that the main takeaway from our paper is that we all as psychologists need to give more consideration as to what has brought us into psychology. We realised while writing this that we had not sat down and thought about what exactly our motivations were for getting into this area of study. After reflecting, we realised how beneficial this could be to students and teachers alike. A way to apply this could be through an intervention.

We also put forward two ideas of what motivates students to gravitate to psychology.

To quote Stewart et al. (2005, p.702) 'knowing that psychology majors want to help people, dislike statistics, and want to understand themselves and others is not news'. That is precisely why we wanted to write about this, to bring the topic into academic discourse. We also acknowledge, as Stewart et al. go on to say, that putting students into categories like this can be stereotypical. We know that every student has a unique reason for sitting in the psychology classroom, and that lumping people into groups is reductionist. However, by starting the conversation and preaching the benefits of understanding student motivations, we can begin to develop interventions to help students. Falgares et al. (2017), gave groups of psychology students the task of reflecting on their representations of what 'psychologist' as a role means. The exercise yielded positive results, including giving students a more realistic view of what careers their degree could lead into. Perhaps alongside this, students might reflect on why this vision of a psychologist is something that they are aspiring to. What is it that set them on this path?

Could it be that looking at what topics have interested us the most, are the ones that we should look to make a career in? Even if our motivations for studying are not immediately clear to us, looking at what we enjoyed the most, could tell us where our intrinsic motivations lie. This could be used to help students to make the (quite terrifying) leap from being a student to being a professional and applying their degrees in a workplace. A BPS published study (Morrison Coulthard, 2017) found that 59.3% of psychology graduates interviewed were working in jobs within the field of psychology. Could we do more to raise this number? Australia recently announced that the prices of its degrees will change, with STEM subjects becoming cheaper and humanities more expensive (Karp, 2020). With the UK government making it clear that they want to promote the STEM subjects (Committee of Public Accounts, 2018), increasing the field employability of students could be a way to demonstrate the worth of the discipline, and allow it to remain as affordable as possible. Understanding student motivation can be a key to signposting towards careers.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the motivations of students in the psychology lecture hall of one UK university, as experienced and observed by two psychologists at opposite ends of their careers – one a teacher, the other a student. It is hoped that this collaboration between Robert and Jerome, finding that they have experienced very similar motivations in the student cohort at the University of Bolton, goes some way to showing that these are common motivating factors in psychology students. The autoethnographic method has been used to deliver both Robert and Jerome's narratives on what brought us to the discipline, and what we have experienced with other students and indeed faculty colleagues, regarding why it is that we are all in the same classroom studying psychology. We hope that our personal, individual accounts will have resonance with readers, that these patterns of student motivation are something that others have noticed, and that this could lead to further research into this area. We also hope that by sharing our personal journeys into psychology, the reader will reflect on their own story, considering the impact that their own personal motivations have had on their career, and indeed their life. Finally, it is hoped that with this piece we can show the validity of autoethnography as a method of sharing the unique stories of teachers and students alike, allowing these experiences to leave the classroom and enter journals so that the academic community can relate to and research.

So… Why did *YOU* decide to study psychology?

Robert Hurst & Jerome Carson

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