



Teaching Psychology At Undergraduate Level: Rethinking What We Teach And How We Teach It

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Traditionally undergraduate psychology has maintained an allegiance to a positivist scientist-practitioner model and has focussed on building a solid theoretical foundation. The development of skills and self-awareness has typically been the domain of postgraduate study. It is argued that in the process of trying to justify itself as a 'science', psychology has lost many of the aspects that first attracts people to its study: the desire for greater understanding of self, others and social phenomena. This article reflects on the experience of offering an undergraduate degree that integrates theory and a valuing of personal and vocational development. A less positivist-dominated formulation of the scientist-practitioner model may offer a constructive way in which to unite the 'human' and 'scientific' sides of psychology.

BACKGROUND

Most prospectuses from university psychology departments profess allegiance to a 'scientist-practitioner model'. The term has its origins in the Boulder Colorado Conference in 1949, and aimed to link the practice and theory of psychology. By linking psychology to science, the profession was accorded a measure of respectability and accountability, enhancing its status as a reputable and viable profession (Corrie & Callahan, 2000).

The concept continues to enjoy widespread support, partly because psychology faces economic and political pressure to prove its cost effectiveness and the model provides clear methods of measuring and 'proving' efficacy. Nonetheless, there are difficulties with the term's implications in education and practice in psychology.

Page (1996), for example, argues that there is not a single scientist-practitioner model, since the ones in existence are based on varying philosophies of science. Most of these, however, are based on a positivist view of science (Frederick, 1990), which Page (1996) maintains is outmoded since science has evolved substantially since the origin of this model.

Furthermore, the term does not refer to a clearly articulated and coherent description of what psychologists can or could do (John, 1998). In practice, psychologists seldom integrate research and practice into a single framework (Barlow et al., as cited in Corrie & Callahan, 2000). Practitioners do not always rely on empirical and theory-driven evidence, but on individual experience and on intuition (Dawes, 1994, as cited in Corrie & Callahan, 2000). Also, practitioners do not necessarily use or support the methods of measuring efficacy implicit in the scientist-practitioner model. This applies especially to

those therapeutic traditions that emphasise personal, subjective experiences and phenomenological methods of understanding (Corrie & Callahan, 2000).

Rather than more clearly linking science with practice, it seems that the scientist-practitioner debate has tended to create a division between the scientist and the practitioner (Corrie & Callahan, 2000). Many psychologists classify themselves as either academics or practising psychologists (therapists). This division is further reflected in the way in which psychology is taught in many undergraduate curricula: undergraduate degrees appear to be the domain of theory, whereas at postgraduate level practice is the focus. It seems that in the quest to support psychology as a scientific endeavour, emphasis is given to certain aspects of psychology – specifically to experimental psychology and inferential statistics – to the detriment of other areas of psychology. Deurzen-Smith has commented that there is a danger in psychology becoming ‘too preoccupied with scientism to be able to inform our understanding of the dilemmas of human existence’ (as cited in Corrie & Callahan, 2000: 416).

In focus group studies conducted by psychology staff at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), prospective psychology students reported that they chose to study psychology in order to learn more about people and about themselves, and that they wanted to study psychological issues that related to the real world. Corballis (1990) argued that psychology as a choice among students is immensely popular, but that ‘the great majority of students in psychology have not enrolled to learn about the science of the mind. They want clinical psychology. They want to understand their own problems, or those of their friends, children or parents’ (p.4). Similarly, Thomas (1990) argued that students want practical applications of psychology relevant to their experience of life in New Zealand.

While the emphasis on theory at undergraduate level and emphasis on practice at postgraduate level may be appropriate in terms of the development of professional skills, the consequence of this practice seems to be a wariness of applied psychology at undergraduate level, including those applications which carry no risk to clients. Yet many students, whether or not actively encouraged to do so, inevitably attempt some form of application of what they are learning to their lives and the issues they confront. It is likely that these students could benefit from learning how to use the knowledge developed in their undergraduate years appropriately and safely so that they can apply it in their own lives.

Educational providers are being called upon to an ever-increasing extent to offer programmes that prepare undergraduate students more directly for the world of work (Langworthy & Turner, 2003). Most students graduating with a first degree in psychology do not go on to further study in psychology (see, for example, the University of New South Wales’ website on graduate careers), and yet traditionally undergraduate psychology degrees do not teach psychological skills. As psychology has become more professionalised, psychological practice has been seen as the domain of those suitably qualified, through years of training and/or experience, to be allowed to practice the skills. What it has meant for the undergraduate student in psychology, is an increasing remoteness from the practical side and the human skills component of psychology.

Students do not always seem aware of what skills they gain from their study, and many of the skills students report they seek on entering psychology

programmes (e.g., the ability to understand themselves and others better) are also not specifically addressed.

In addition to the split between science and practise/application, a further split appears to have developed between the cognitive and emotional sides of psychology. Rationality appears to be prioritised and the study of emotion is often given less significance, particularly at undergraduate level. It is as if the academic community, in its search to identify with mainstream scientific paradigm, has lost its connection with 'emotion'. Seidler (1994) highlights how our culture values intellectual knowledge gathered by the scientific method, and devalues emotional experience as a source of knowledge. This is a particular irony considering the centrality of emotion in popular conceptions of psychology. It may be that emotion is perceived as threatening in an intellectual or academic environment as if it implies the disintegration of logic and objectivity. Since the publication of Goleman's 1996 book on emotional intelligence, however, there has been growing interest in and recognition of emotional competence and its significance in the working lives of a people from a wide range of occupations, not just practising therapists and psychologists. For any person contemplating working with other people, there is a need for understanding one's own and others' emotional reactions (Goleman, 1998; Heron, 1992).

A further dichotomy has developed out of the scientist-practitioner model's reliance on a scientist position that has allied itself with a positivist approach; that between the positivist and non-positivist forms of thinking. Many academics in psychology emphasise quantitative methods or portray qualitative approaches as less scientific and less valid. In contrast, qualitative approaches appear to have been adopted more readily by the other social sciences, who seem less reluctant to venture beyond the confines of positivism. In our experience at AUT, non-positivist approaches to understanding human dilemmas tend to be adopted more at postgraduate levels as engagement with the messy realities of clinical work make this necessary.

While each of these dichotomies may have slightly different roots and manifest in different ways in the discipline of psychology, their combined end product seems to be a form of undergraduate psychology that is perceived by students as too theoretical, having less direct relevance to everyday life and work than they desire, and too little of the 'human' component which many students expect they might find in their chosen area of study.

Possible solutions

In 1990 Corballis argued that scientific and professional psychology were increasingly being drawn apart, and he argued that the solution was restructuring psychology departments into two divisions: a separate scientific psychology department, and a professional programme. Similarly, Hughes (1990) proposed that 'academic psychology' could eventually be absorbed into broader areas of interest, and 'consistent with its popular usage, the term psychology could then become synonymous with professional psychology' (p.84). Irwin (1990) likewise argued for a separation. He referred to the discipline of psychology as having become 'bloated'; as being too big, the subject areas too disparate. He suggested that scientific psychology should go into the Faculty of Science, and 'non-scientific psychology', including anything to do with clinical psychology, should be located within the Arts (Irwin, 1990).

Others (Beale, 1990; Love, 1990) have argued for an interdisciplinary, intermethodological approach that encourages academic psychology to accept a variety of methods outside the framework of traditional positivism. As Strongman (1990) contended, 'if one takes a liberal view of science and adopts a broad perspective on the research endeavours and professional activities of those who are called psychologists, the idea of a crisis disappears' (p.91). So it is not that science and applied psychology cannot be studied together, rather that the dominance of particular research methodologies originating within experimental psychology are not always relevant to applied psychology interests and needs, and that our framework of what constitutes scientific methods needs to be expanded.

Ogden (1990) saw the solution as providing a more balanced undergraduate programme, one that met student demands and employment needs, and provided a New Zealand perspective as well as an up-to-date theoretical base. She suggested that, 'In order to increase the relevance of traditional positive psychology for the many undergraduate students who are interested in clinical and other applied branches of psychology, our academic psychologists need to broaden their lectures to include applied and clinical examples' (p.92).

THE BHSC PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAMME

Within this context, our School of Psychology set out to develop a degree that provided both a strong theoretical grounding in the discipline of psychology (the 'science' of psychology), and focused on the 'human' side of psychology and application of knowledge. The degree aimed to promote both self-awareness and vocational development. Students were clearly told that they would not be qualifying as practitioners/psychologists by the end of their undergraduate degrees. However, the aim was that students would develop and recognise that they possess a range of skills and understanding attractive to prospective employers: well-developed communication skills; sound interpersonal skills; understanding of individual, interpersonal and group dynamics; and, analytical and critical thinking skills. The aim was also that students would understand in what contexts and areas their psychological knowledge and skills could be relevant in the workforce.

Degree structure

The Bachelor of Health Science, major in Psychology, is a three year degree distributed across six semesters made up of twenty-four 'papers' (courses or subjects). Several introductory psychology papers are followed by more advanced papers, and there are several compulsory research papers. The number of psychology papers required at undergraduate level exceeds that typically required within psychology programmes, and in addition to the traditional papers in experimental and cognitive psychology, there are several more applied papers. However, it is in the approach to the material and the goals of teaching that AUT has attempted to assist students in their personal and vocational development.

Reflection and application emphasis

All papers provide a sound theoretical basis. However, the emphasis is on application to real-life issues. Theory is illustrated by vignettes, case studies, newspaper articles, video material, observation exercises, interviewing exercises and self reflection. The aim is to promote self-awareness and awareness of others, and demonstrate the relevance and application of psychological knowledge and skills.

For example, in developmental psychology, students interview members of their parents' and grandparents' generation to find out 'What has changed from then to now?'. This leads into a discussion around changing environmental influences on development. In a section on parenting, students role-play several parenting styles in response to a vignette, and then discuss and analyse their role-plays for efficacy and consequences. In the final assessment for this paper, students use developmental theories to reflect on either their own development, that of someone they interview, or a famous person. Interestingly, most students chose to reflect on their own developmental issues (Note: student counselling services are available if issues arise for students that need to be addressed therapeutically). In the paper Psychological Assessment, after students have learned the key aspects of test construction and concepts such as reliability and validity, they construct and administer their own test. Examples include an 'attitudes towards health-related behaviours' questionnaire, a 'measures of anxiety in classroom contexts' scale, and a scale to assess suitability for waitressing jobs. In the Health Psychology paper, students analyse the stressors in their own lives and how they typically respond. They learn practical skills and techniques to manage stressful situations. These are real-life issues and students can see how what they learn translates into practise in everyday life.

Learning environment

Most of the psychology classes at AUT are small in size, averaging about 30 per class. This has several advantages above larger group settings: students can get to know each other and staff well; staff are more easily able to offer containment to students where personal issues arise; students have more opportunity to share their personal experiences and practise limited skills (e.g., communication or interviewing skills, administering tests); and, more discussion and reflection can be encouraged. Most teaching staff have an open door policy and students are able to consult with staff regularly. Fortnightly forums are held where students can meet on an informal basis, often over coffee or lunch. Forums help develop support networks and offer a vehicle for airing difficulties in a non-threatening environment.

Specific papers focussed on application

Two papers (Critical Issues and Practicum Analysis – now renamed 'Psychology at Work') are included in the degree specifically to help students see the relevance and application of psychology and to recognise and develop their skills.

In 'Critical Issues', students select and research areas of interest in New Zealand society. Some examples include domestic violence, racism, corporal punishment and youth suicide. By choosing topics that they come into contact

with on a daily basis and in the media, it is hoped that students will see psychology at work.

'Practicum Analysis', a paper taken in their final year, aims to help students see the potential areas in which psychology can be applied, and gives them an opportunity to assist with psychology-related tasks in a workplace setting. The outline of the paper reads as follows:

Students will gain industry experience and integrate psychological theory and knowledge with work-based practices. Applications of psychological theory and skills to the workplace will be explored including identifying theory that underpins organisational practice. Students will critically reflect on the relationship between knowledge gained in the academic context and workplace practice.

Examples of placement settings include school mentoring programmes, Lifeline telephone counselling, social development work through the local Child Youth and Family Service, and in a play therapy setting for children hospitalised with long-term chronic medical conditions.

Challenges in setting up the programme

Although the idea of including a practical element at undergraduate level and encouraging personal reflection would not sound unusual in many other academic departments including social work, education and nursing, developing this programme in psychology, has been a challenge. In order for a new programme to be offered at a New Zealand university, the programme needs to be approved internally within the university, as well as externally by all other universities. This takes place as a formal process allowing for responses and counter responses to proposals. When this degree was first proposed, responses from some of the other universities were sceptical. Concern was expressed regarding the implied self-reflection and application focus, that the 'core' of psychology would not be taught, that the scientist-practitioner model would not be upheld, and that AUT would produce graduates who felt they were professional practitioners. Such responses are a testament to the depth of the divisions described above.

STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The first intake of psychology students was in February 2002. As part of an attempt to explore the development of the programme and to get feedback on how it was working, we conducted interviews and a focus group with our first small group of graduates (six graduates). The focus group was structured in an open-ended format and asked students to reflect on their three years at AUT from a personal and professional standpoint. Emerging themes from this group, and from discussions with faculty staff about the degree, cluster around the following areas of personal and vocational development.

Personal development

Growing and changing as a person was one of the main themes identified by students. For example:

I've changed – I have learned a lot about myself doing this course.

Personally it's helped me understand things at a much deeper level.

Several staff have supported this, pointing to an increased maturity, depth of understanding and analysis in presenting case studies, and an increased ability to take responsibility in subsequent classes. Students also mentioned that they felt more able to understand the issues of other people:

Sometimes you see something happening and you think, oh maybe this is ... little things like that ... like spotting relationship issues.

Furthermore, the students described an increased ability to understand their own issues:

My relationship with X has changed – from not having a relationship basically and I blamed him a lot. And then just to find out that he did a lot of things for a reason and that was the way he was brought up. Just kind of realising that everyone does things for a reason and so being more open with what's happened ... I gave him another chance and he responded, and so I never would have given him that chance if I hadn't learned the stuff we did and the way we did.

We did learn all the theory. It's not like we haven't had enough theoretical perspective. We've done what was needed as a basis, but with anything, you have got to be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses before you start looking at someone else, so I think it's imperative that you do that. You'd be missing a big step in the process if you didn't ... We didn't even need to be told to do it. You learn about yourself.

Students seem to have developed the ability to reflect more deeply on their own issues, to contextualise them and to better understand them. Interestingly, rather than the approach taken to teaching in the degree opening up unresolved issues that would then cause too much turmoil and stress, several students found that addressing personal issues helped contain them:

I know my boundaries and what I am capable of and not capable of...

I have realised that I am not ready for the big world yet.

Inevitably, the content area of psychology touches upon emotionally-laden topics. This may be challenging for students to address, but students felt that these issues should be confronted, in an environment in which they could be safely managed, rather than ignored:

... and I have learned about myself – not always an easy process.

At times it's hard to learn stuff about your family and your life and friends and things. It's so challenging, but at the same time ... it has been invaluable.

Several students also pointed out that when they did not feel ready to explore personal issues, they choose not to:

... and you will close yourself off to it if you are not ready to open it up.

Also, it is interesting that contrary to students finding that this type of awareness occurred too early on in their professional and personal development, evidence suggests that this was something that they felt would have been helpful even at an earlier stage, for example, during secondary schooling:

... and something I wish I had had the basis of earlier.

Furthermore, it seems that the degree has helped in producing a cognitive shift – from dualistic thinking to realistic thinking patterns. For example:

I have changed – I am more grounded. I kind of went with the flow in the past – now I am more open to ideas and the world and myself, I am not so – this has happened because of that – I can now see two sides to the story. So it's been huge in terms of my own personal development.

I think about the views I had when I first started. I can see where my views came from – but I can now flip the roles and also see where someone else comes from or whatever situation.

This development is a particularly encouraging one. Implicit in the scientist-practitioner model are the concepts of critical thinking, analytical thinking and the ability to tolerate ambiguity. The concern with what has been considered to be a more 'soft' approach, one in which emotion is valued, has been that students would become too enmeshed in 'airy-fairy' self-indulgent analysis. Conversely, the approach taken in the degree, and the reflection encouraged, has developed the very critical thinking ability that the scientist-practitioner model promotes. Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry and Osborne (1990) point out that learning cannot occur if emotional defences are too high. In an area such as psychology, which touches on emotional matters simply by the definition of the subject matter, the likelihood of defence is high and, so too, the possibility that learning cannot take place unless it occurs in a context of self-discovery, openness, empathy and understanding. These reflections from students lend support to the notion that emotion and rational thought are not mutually exclusive.

Students seem very aware of the stereotype around particular schools of psychology and of the approach taken within more traditional degrees, and

seem dissatisfied with the upholding of these as true psychology, inferior to alternative paradigms:

The people that have come out that have done psychology elsewhere – it's just so theoretical and dry and they don't have any practical or interpersonal skills. They don't have, you know, the ability to relate to people – you've got to be able to communicate with people and talk to people but elsewhere you can get through a psychology degree without ... not even talking, you don't have to interact. You show up to big classes and you sit down.

The key thing for me that has come out of it is ... like when we did all that behaviourism stuff – they sit at the computer and do experiments with rats and like ... they did that for 3 periods! We covered that fairly quickly but then we related it to life experiences. So we go, 'Imagine a child'. Talking about it like this I felt I learned much more than sitting in front of a computer ... and they tell us, we didn't get a thing out of that as well.

Students also point to the closeness of relationships developed among the students:

We've helped each other out so much – ring each other up and ask, how do you do this and we've learned to support each other.

Rather than unresolved issues becoming a difficulty, students seemed to have some mechanisms of containing them by, for example, relying more on each other. This is a positive development that further emphasises the 'human' side of psychology: students learn about and support each other in their respective journeys towards self-discovery. They learn to communicate, to support, and to empathise. This feature of the degree is in contrast to what many students reported of more traditional training programmes, experienced as competitive and highly individualistic.

At the same time, however, it is apparent from students' feedback that the closeness of relationships that developed among students and staff, created the necessary environment within which this type of personal development work could take place.

We needed our tutor a lot. Maybe because it was the first time but we had a lot of needs and a lot of anxiety and confusion.

The fact that this first group of graduates formed a small cohort would clearly have promoted the unity and cohesiveness that developed.

Vocational development

Vocational themes centred on developing awareness of options and opportunities, seeing psychology in action and understanding its relevance, and realising the value of learning. This had both positive and negative aspects to it:

I really feel like I know about the industry and I know about the actual workforce rather than papers and just going to uni every day – that's the biggest thing.

You go into the workplace setting and you realise that psychology can be anywhere – like a business or anything.

Students commented that they had better ideas of future work possibilities:

It was so valuable talking to the people that worked there, finding out what their paths have been ... how did they get there, what degree did they do, what do they like and not like about their jobs ... all these kinds of experiential questions that could give me so much insight.

They felt they had developed useful skills:

I do have a lot of skills to put into an organisation. I think I have a lot to offer, but before [Practicum Analysis] I didn't see that initially. So that's given me the confidence that I so have something to offer and I am capable of getting a job.

Sometimes this came as somewhat of a surprise and it seems that the practical experience paper really integrated students' knowledge and provided insight into where skills could be applied:

I didn't know I was using my skills or that I had any until I had to write it down and reflect, and it was like, on my gosh ... actually I do have some.

Whilst at the same time that this has provided students with optimism and opened up opportunities for them, it has also brought with it a measure of uncertainty. Students are aware now of how many opportunities there are, a fact that sometimes makes career decisions more difficult:

I have so many more ideas of what is out there – so many things I could have done and could do (this is both a good and a bad thing).

Maybe we are a little more confused about our future and where it's going, because we can see the options, but we've got something out of this regardless of what we do and we will use it in the future, whether it's impacting on someone else's life, professionally maybe, or personally.

But am I just interested in that because that's all I know?

*If I had done another placement would I chose another direction ...
do we only know what we know?*

Many students follow a route from school through to university and expect that by the completion of their degrees, they possess the necessary skills and knowledge to walk into a job and be able to do exactly what is required within that job. The reality is that degrees and qualifications are often little more than stepping stones, and it is on the job that the learning to do the job often occurs. For many students, this comes as a surprise. Interestingly, for the group of graduates from this degree, this knowledge appears to have developed through the training and the practical component:

Something I find hard is that we have finished this degree and we can't get a job ... we are not trained to do anything ... we're not practically trained really to do anything ... You do a degree and you have a whole basis of skills and then you are on the job, learning, how to do that job.

Whilst this has been a difficult reality for students to grasp, it is also a powerful one, and represents a shift from the mechanistic idea that training has one end point: a job. Education should be about something bigger: opening up possibilities, and an awareness that reality is complex and ambiguous.

When the degree was developed, concern was expressed by educational institutions about the practical components of the degree, with fears that students would see themselves as mini-practitioners. Ironically, the reverse seems to have occurred. Students specifically mention they 'know their boundaries'. These students have, in the course of their experiences, developed an awareness of the scope of psychological practice and undertaking:

'Practicum Analysis' has given us some direction. Going into a workplace having to learn, actually see it and go 'ah', rather than read it in a text book ... just doing it.

Whilst recognising that they have some skills, they are also very aware of their shortcomings. These students are aware of the limitations of their knowledge, whilst knowing that what they know can also be used as a starting point. This is a positive, unexpected consequence of the training.

General issues

Students reported some difficulties with being the first to undertake this degree, especially since they reported being aware that this degree differed in approach to many other psychology undergraduate programmes.

It's been hard being the guinea pigs ... that this is new; not tried and tested.

One does worry if it will be accepted elsewhere.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

There are some inherent challenges in the approach we have taken that have become more apparent as time goes by.

Students, for example, do find it challenging to reflect on themselves. Clearly, there is the potential to unearth unresolved emotional trauma. Further, whilst it seems that students value learning how psychology can be applied in a vast range of contexts, students can become overwhelmed by the diversity and complexity of the choices available. How does one prevent the challenge from becoming too great? Can we assist students in making sense of what is out there and help them recognise that there may be multiple truths? Students clearly need appropriate non-judgemental support, containment and counselling (MacCulloch, 1998).

The question is also whether or not we will be able to sustain the programme in its current form. It is expensive to run a programme with small numbers of students, and our programme has been in existence for too short a time to be able to assess if our approach pays off in the long run in terms of student retention. As we enter into the fourth offering of this degree, pressure to take larger numbers of students mounts. Competition between universities for students and resources is tough. As the size of classes increases, it is going to be interesting to see if the personal flavour, the ability to self-reflect and apply knowledge to real life contexts, can occur to the same extent and within an environment in which students feel sufficiently contained. Staff have had some experience with teaching papers with larger numbers of students (up to six hundred on the developmental psychology paper), and we still try and encourage self reflection and application. The context for this is mainly in smaller group tutorials, in assessment exercises, and by frequently structuring group tasks within larger lecture theatres where students discuss and reflect on issues in smaller groups. Further research and tracking of future graduates is required to see if this can be sustained.

In order for this type of teaching to occur, we depend on having staff that are able to teach in this manner – staff that have the ability to foster reflection, the ability to contain issues if and when they arise, and sufficient personal awareness themselves to promote this in others. Staff need to be teachers from the heart (Apps, 1996). In a sense, staff need to be both skilled therapists, and teachers/academics. This is a balance that is difficult to find in a climate where there is a split between academia and practice.

Measuring our efficacy poses another dilemma. How does one define, and then measure, personal and vocational development? We acknowledge that we need more concrete measures and clearer definitions.

Further, we will need to engage in more systematic and larger scale follow up of graduates to see if similar outcomes are found. It would also be useful to evaluate what outcomes occur in schools that offer a more positivist approach, as well as what outcomes occur for graduates from areas other than psychology. In other words, are the outcomes we are finding unique to our school and our school's philosophy?

A further challenge to our way of teaching psychology is defining how we fit within a scientist-practitioner model. Clearly, a scientist-practitioner model rooted in positivism and empiricism leaves little room for the psychology we

wish to teach. However, Page (1996) points out that 'Despite an apparent inertia among psychologists in moving away from empiricism and falsification, the philosophy of science has moved regardless' (p.104). According to John (1998), the largely consensual, positive understanding of science is breaking down. In other words, the assumption that there is a conclusive, incontrovertible truth 'out there' and that science has an unfailing method of producing it (a method synonymous with quantification, operational, and experimentation), has been challenged. There is increasing recognition that knowledge production is, in principle, always uncompleted.

Page (1996) argues that universities should have a spirit of free inquiry, and should not dictate a particular philosophical position. John (1998) proposes that:

Students' understanding of psychology and their involvement with it would be assisted by encouraging them to see psychology not just as a body of incontrovertible scientific knowledge ... but as a complex human enterprise and important constituent of contemporary society that is itself open to, and awaiting elucidation by, psychologically and other methods of inquiry.

(p.29)

Stricker (2000) agrees with adopting a broad viewpoint of science within a framework of a spirit of 'scepticism, curiosity, and inquiry about practice that typify a good scientist' (p.253). These characteristics and attitudes would fit well with a scientist-practitioner model that falls closer to a social constructivist view of science, and one that incorporates an expanded view of what constitutes scientific evidence (Chwalisz, 2003). This is a model that is open to individual experience and shared cultural experience as vital sources of information (as argued by James in Corrie & Callahan, 2000). It is still evidence-based, but not necessarily based in a conceptualisation of science rooted in positivist philosophy (Chwalisz, 2003).

If we achieve this shift and see the scientist-practitioner model less narrowly, then this opens the door to offer training that is more applied. We can see emotion, self-reflection and application as part of, and fitting in with this model, and acknowledge that current measures are not sophisticated enough yet to grasp and reflect the nature of human experience.

Structuring more personal reflection and application within an undergraduate psychology degree constitutes a departure from mainstream practice. Doing something different in the face of mainstream paradigm is always difficult. It requires persistence and support, but we remain optimistic that we can develop a programme that has both academic rigour and more closely matches the needs of students.

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Sonja Goedeke is a clinical psychologist and senior lecturer in the School of Psychology at AUT University. Sonja has clinical experience in child and adolescent mental health and mental health promotion programmes. She has a small private practice, and has particular interests in the teaching of psychology, as well as women's health issues, including the experience of infertility, postnatal depression, and parenting. Sonja's main teaching areas are in developmental and abnormal psychology.

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