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## Why psychology isn't unified, and probably never will be

Green (2015), in his write up on 'why psychology isn't unified, and probably never will be', affirmed that psychology is "a fairly heterogeneous group, ontologically and epistemologically" which is the major reason why the field is not unified. This is in line with what Koch said about the discipline of psychology when he asserted that 'psychology was not and could not be a single coherent discipline' based on his experience of the past and present of psychology. Historically and in line with the writing of Green (2015), Psychologists have sought for a unified discipline starting with Wilhelm Wundt's establishment of a department of psychology in Leipzig, Germany in order to unite the diverse views in psychology through experimental procedure.

In his write up, Green (2015) highlighted the historical antecedents of Psychology with references to the works of Wilhelm Wundt in establishing a scientific psychology that emphasized 'consciousness' investigated through introspection in Germany, William James' functionalism that emphasizes study of the full array of mental variations and the internal and external forces that affect mental variations and adaptation in the United States of America, while Behaviorism emphasizes the study of observable behavior through empiricism rather than emphasizing unobservable mental process, consciousness and unconsciousness. Obviously, the foundation of psychology, what it studies and how it studies it were never agreed upon, unlike what is obtainable in the physical sciences based on Khunian paradigm. To put the problem into proper perspective, there is the need to recognize that the problem with the unification of psychology by diverse schools of thoughts stemmed from the conceptualization of the subject of psychological enquiry.

Unlike the physical sciences that have their methods developed following initial leads of knowledge, scientific psychology was not a planned endeavor built on well-defined problems and researches by groups of people who share similar view on the profession and what to study. That is, much of scientific psychology was not built on a rich knowledge because as "at the time of its inception, psychology was unique in the extent to which its institutionalization preceded its content and its method preceded its problems". Green (2015) agreed with this when it highlighted the problems with the quest for a unified psychology by giving valid references to the subject matter of enquiry and approach in psychology. Unlike the physical sciences where certainty is based on mathematical laws, psychological subjects of enquiries and postulations are as diverse as humans and are based on statistical probabilities rather than mathematical accuracy.

The difficulty in uniting the discipline of psychology might not be unconnected with the fact that while the physical sciences are based on a rigorous mathematical procedures that aids its prediction across situations, cultures, etc. For instance, the law of earth's gravitational pull is a universal law that is applicable in all environments, as long as the conditions put forth in the premises are met. In psychology, for instance personality studies, and with emphasis on trait theory of personalities, some traits are expected to be correlated with some qualities but this is not always true for some obvious reasons such as cognitive processes. Even among traits theorists, there is no agreement on the number of traits into which personality should be factored with some accepting five-factor model, some accept seven factor model while some

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insist on six-factor model.

In its quest for a unified discipline, Psychologists have established different divisions, committees and associations pursuing the unification of the discipline (Green, 2015). However, rather than unifying the field, the various groups, committees and associations have led to more divisions and exposure of the futility of pursuing a unification of the discipline. As a matter of fact, Koch gave up on the quest for a unified psychology by stating that psychology should be renamed “psychological studies” rather than psychology because it cannot be unified.

Why can't psychology be unified? That is a good question answered by Green (2015) when he asserted that the “the various proposals for unification have come from a diverse range of epistemological and ontological perspectives”, and that these proponents have sought unification from their epistemological and ontological views without taking opposing views into consideration. To these proponents, their view – humanism, behaviorism, structuralism, psychoanalysis and so on is enough to explain what psychology is all about. This approach what entails Psychologists fitting in into those schools of thought or they fizzle out by seeking those with whom they share similar views. Does this unify the discipline of psychology? Apparently, the answer is a no.

If the various views do not in any way unify the discipline of psychology, what then is unification and how can it be attained? A unified discipline is one that has an established paradigm for defining, evaluating, studying and reporting its concepts. A unified field has a formal language agreed upon based on evidence. While the physical sciences have formal languages that explain observations and concepts, psychology does not. Psychology explains phenomena with respect to influential relationship rather than causational or predictability as is applicable in physical sciences. For every observation in the physical sciences, there is a generally accepted explanation unlike in psychology where explanations of observed phenomena are based on the theoretical orientations of the Psychologists explaining the phenomena.

How do we explain the subject of enquiry in psychology? The Structuralists postulated the subject as consciousness and the method was introspection, the functionalists postulated the subjects of psychological enquiry to be the mental life of humans, animals, among others through introspection, mental tests, questionnaires and physiological measures while behaviorism stated that the subject of enquiry in psychology is neither consciousness, unconscious process or the mental life but observable behavior and this can be attained through empirical means. Each historic school of thought in psychology has the aim of unifying the discipline though they ended up further dividing the discipline based on their theoretical postulations and mode of enquiry. Though behaviorism was received with glee, it soon had its fair share of criticism owing to its insistence on experimentation and empirical approach to studying concepts and non-acceptance of constructs that are not behavioral such as the mental processes, consciousness among others, as subjects of scientific enquiry.

Basically, the history of psychology has shown more division while attempting to unify the discipline. These divisions are not as a result of the conscious effort of theorists but the effects of the time and events during which the various theoretical postulations were made. Trying to unify these diversities will not be an easy task due to the fact while some subjects of psychological enquiry require qualitative approaches, some others require quantitative approach and some require a combination of the qualitative and quantitative approaches. By implication, a unified discipline will require a fusion of the different epistemologies and ontological views into

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a whole for unified psychology to be in place.

Aside the definition of its subject matter and mode of enquiry was the problem of internal wrangling among members of the psychological community. The disagreement between the academic Psychologists and the Professional Psychologists also mean that the discipline had unnecessary division and argument on what should be regarded as psychology and the legitimate use of the term 'psychology'. These divisions led to the appearance of doctorate of psychology degree (Psy. D), the rises of cognitivism, computationalism, neuroclinical psychology, evolutionism, neuroscience, among others. Like Koch, Green (2015) affirmed that "psychology" did not originate in a well-defined set of scientific problems that were pursued by a small group of like-minded intellectuals but by diverse intellectuals pursuing diverse problems through diverse means necessary at the time.

There is a general saying that if the foundation is destroyed, what will the righteous do? How do you build on a divided foundation? Psychology is like a house that is beautiful on the outside but is filled with dirt within. The history of psychology as a discipline is not unified in most ramification and until this is done, psychology might never be unified like the physical or biological sciences. At best, psychology might become a house made up of strong sub-disciplines like what obtained in biological sciences that has sub-disciplines such as botany, zoology, pharmacy, medicine, biochemistry, surgery among others rather than a unified whole. That is, the sub-disciplines of psychology will have established paradigms based on well-defined concepts guiding their epistemologies and ontological views. Seeking to unify the diverse fields in psychology without dealing with epistemological and ontological issues is like building castles in the air and a waste of valuable time and resources that could be used in strengthening the sub-disciplines in psychology. It might be possible in the future when the concept of psychology is well articulated and defined but for now, it is an avoidable task.