May 28, 2020

Dear Sam:

I have now heard from all readers concerning your submission to JMB, “Why Has the Field of Psychology Not Developed Like the Natural Sciences?” I will list the readers’ comments below; plus I have notated a copy of JMB, also attached. The reviews are nmxed and the paper also reads a tad on the long side. Overall -- and you may not agree with me -- I think you should remove the section lead-ins (A, B, and C) and reduce section A (the latter sections are composed more strongly) and present to your reader one long treatise. Some of the footnotes in section A are so very interesting that they can perhaps be moved into the body of the paper? By the way, the format is not in our required style and I have attempted to assist in that via my notations in the reference list. But again, I believe the paper can be shortened 15-20%.

JMB does not typically urge authors to use acronyms or initialisms, which can lead to reification – just when reification is a facet that an author may be cautioning against. Do your sentences all make sense if you do not initialize? If not, there may be a gap in meaning.

Across psychology, some acronyms are not ambiguous (for example, MMPI, ANOVA). But other abbreviations are not so fortunate, and even a three letter acronym can generate hundreds of meanings. Thus, this state of affairs leads to different meanings ascribed to acronyms and initialisms. For instance, SD can refer to the Semantic Differential scale, standard deviation, social desirability, sleep deprivation etc. Hermann Ebbinghaus in 1885 showed that ambiguous stimuli are poorly discriminated. There is absolutely no reason to overload your text with ambiguous codes that render the text arduous. Readers should not have to work so hard to decipher a sentence’s meaning by decoding abbreviations. At least, that is my contention.

The writing lacks proper transition material from time to time. In fact, the beginning section, A, seems somewhat helter skelter: not disciplined discourse. Paragraphs must be more than one sentence. You should not end a paragraph with a blocked quite. It weakens the transitions.

1. We think the argument may be stronger if you omit your allegiance to neural or somatic dependent or independent variables and as a solution to the psychology-physics mismatch. You only touch upon this issue and it is an enormous one. Plus, questions of validity still remain regardless of whether a response can be witnessed on a neural level or not.

2. We suggest you introduce the concept of operationism earlier. And why does not operationism solve the problem for psychology? The concept must be deficient in several ways. You might consider introducing it on page 5?

3. Page 8, top: if this is your central argument, in some way alert the reader. Line 14: “inadequate measurement” can have many different meanings, as your paper shows throughout. Can you be more specific here? JMB usually does not summarize what will come. You can omit the summaries throughout the paper.

4. Page 9, lines 17-19: the topic of fraud is a whole different paper. We suggest omit this here.

5. Page 14: up to here, you have been convincing the reader that psychology is not a science equivalent to physics. So, how can you say what you have said in the first sentence?

6. Page 15, top lines: are these the explanations Newell claimed? It is not clear. Bottom several lines: explain more adequately or give an example.

7. Page 16, line 8: is this the same “gap” that on page 14 you wrote did not exist? Later, you make a very good point at bottom concerning the conflation of theory and methods (such as observations). We have no difficulty if you want to expand this. The brief discussion reminds me of some of Joe Rychlak’s work.

8. Page 17, middle paragraph: this paragraph is all over the place.

9. Page 20: the figure lengths are not equal—I measured them. Plus, I don’t think we need a figure to help picture this well-known image. Line 3 from bottom: you gloss quickly over the realist approach. This seems too fast to us.

10. Page 21: the interval scale issue has been emotionally argued about. Some scales that were regarded as interval have been discredited. On the other matter, one could in fact say that Einstein is three or more times more intelligent than the “imbecile” (a politically incorrect word these days, by the way).

11. Page 24, bottom: how can you write that a jnd is a purely theoretical concept when there is an operational definition of it?

12. Do we need permission to use the figure? Who is the copyright holder? Is the figure original to this article?

In our opinion a revision would require effort and two attempts. One reason to shorten the paper is to force your hand on jumping from one topic to the next. We require greater discipline of thought, as well as consistency. Is or is not psychology amenable to such scientific equality? You may not realize it, but you waiver.

Our suggestions are now in your hands. When you reach a decision, please let me know.

Best,

Ray

Raymond Russ, Editor

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