Theory-Informed Psychological Research
Discussion
Time: 45 minutes

This session should be completed after trainees have engaged in the Psychological Theory Lightning Lessons Session and have received an overview of theory in psychological science. After briefly learning about more than one theory in psychological science and taking some time to discuss differences in the ways that theologians and psychological scientists approach theory, trainees will consider how the theories they learned about could be used to create a research question.

Trainees should be placed into small groups (4-5 trainees) who have similar interests. Accompanied by at least one psychologist, trainees should go through each of the theories they learned about and consider how they might derive a research question that could be addressed with a correlational design and a research question that could be addressed with an experimental design based on what that theory proposes. Depending on the number of theories discussed, trainees could be asked to consider up to ten potential research questions (e.g., five theories multiplied by two types of studies). That is a lot to ask of trainees in a 45-minute session, so trainees should be reassured to not stress if they do not get to all theories or discuss both an experimental and correlational study for each. Their small group might feel that one theory is more relevant to the types of work they do and may spend the entire time thinking about designing an experimental study and a correlational study relating to that theory. However, encourage trainees to practice approaching the challenge of considering the role of theory in designing an empirical study, even if the study doesn't feel directly relevant to the type of work that they do. The psychologists in each small group can help to address concerns about the applicability of various theories.

Instructions to be displayed for trainees:

Based on the theories you just learned about, generate one empirical study that could be investigated using each of the following designs:
•   Correlational study
•   Experimental study
Theories (modify based on theories discussed):
•   Self-Determination Theory
•   Broaden-and-Build Theory
•   Systems Developmental Theories

Extensions: If more time is available trainees could work through a correlational and experimental study for all of the previously discussed theories, or they could write more thorough discussions of the study.

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