

Theory in Psychology

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Phenomena

“A phenomenon (plural, phenomena) is a general result that has been observed reliably in systematic empirical research,” (pg. 166).

Motivation to Work

Bystander Effect

McGurk Effect

Serial Position Effect

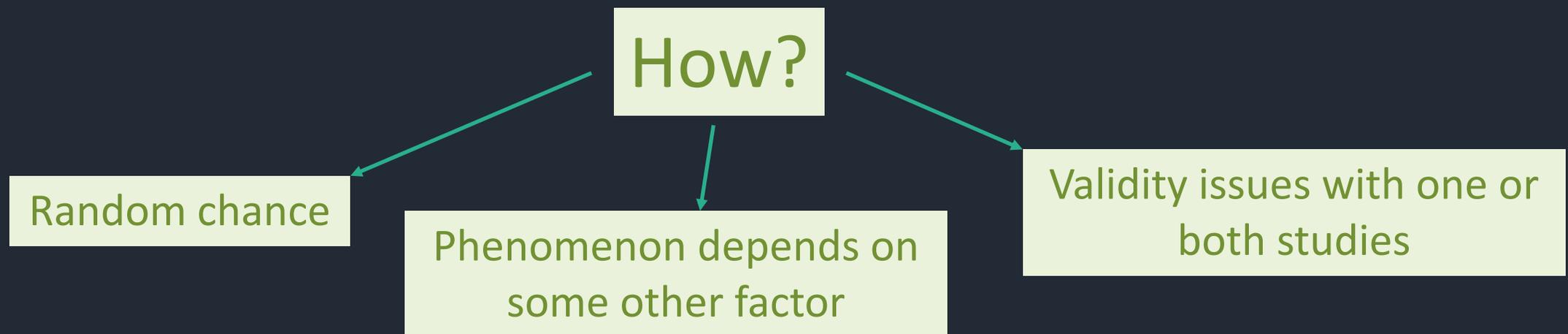
End of History Illusion

Replicability

For findings to be considered phenomena, we must see it consistently across many studies

A single study is not definitive proof of a phenomenon

- Sometimes two studies looking at the same thing can have different results



Theories

A theory is a coherent explanation or interpretation of one or more phenomena.

Organization

Connects phenomena in ways to help them make more sense

Prediction

Helps predict what will happen given certain circumstances

Can help us design interventions

Generation of New Research

Guides questions and topics for new research

Theories

A theory is a coherent explanation or interpretation of one or more phenomena.

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In most areas, there are multiple theories explaining the same phenomena

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Can a theory be useful if it is inaccurate?

The Variety of Theories

Formality

The extent to which the components of the theory and the relationships among them are specified clearly and in detail.

Scope

The number and diversity of the phenomena they explain or interpret

Approach

The kinds of theoretical ideas they are constructed from (functional, mechanistic, stage, typologies)

Formality

The extent to which the components of the theory and the relationships among them are specified clearly and in detail.

Many theories start as informal and can develop into more formal theories

Example of Highly Formal Theory

Prospect Theory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM91d5I36Po>

Scope

The number and diversity of the phenomena they explain or interpret

Many early psych theories were super broad
(e.g., Freud)

Broad

Organize more phenomena but tend to be less formal and less precise in their predictions

Narrow

Organize fewer phenomena but tend to be more formal and more precise in their predictions.

Approach

The kinds of theoretical ideas they are constructed from (functional, mechanistic, stage, typologies)

Functional

explain psychological phenomena in terms of their function or purpose

Stage

specify a series of stages that people pass through as they develop or adapt to their environment

Mechanistic

focus on specific variables, structures, and processes, and how they interact to produce the phenomena

Typologies

Categorize behavior or people into distinct types

Approach

The kinds of theoretical ideas they are constructed from (functional, mechanistic, stage, typologies)

Functional

explain psychological phenomena in terms of their function

Do you think there will ever be a single theory that explains all psychological disorders?

structures, interact to

Stage

specify a series of stages that people pass through as they develop or adapt to their environment

Typologies

Categorize behavior or people into distinct types

Using Theories

Basic steps

- 1** Start with a set of phenomena and either construct a theory to explain or interpret them or choose an existing theory to work with
- 2** Make a prediction about some new phenomenon that should be observed if the theory is correct (**hypothesis**)
- 3** Conduct an empirical study to test the hypothesis
- 4** Re-evaluate the theory (do the findings match the theory?)

The Research Cycle

