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Why Study Psychology?

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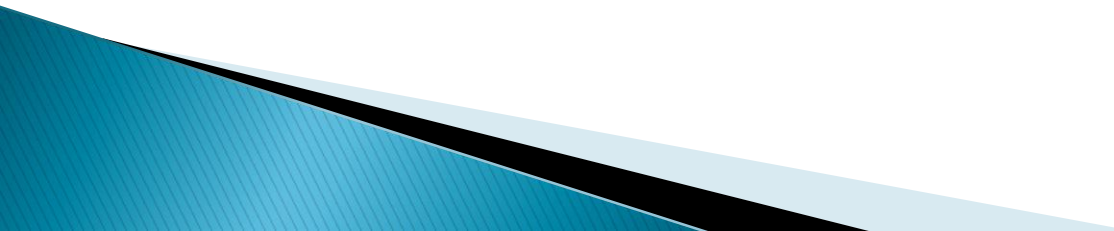
Main Idea

- ▶ Through the study of human and animal behaviour, people can discover psychological principles that have the potential to enrich the lives of humans.

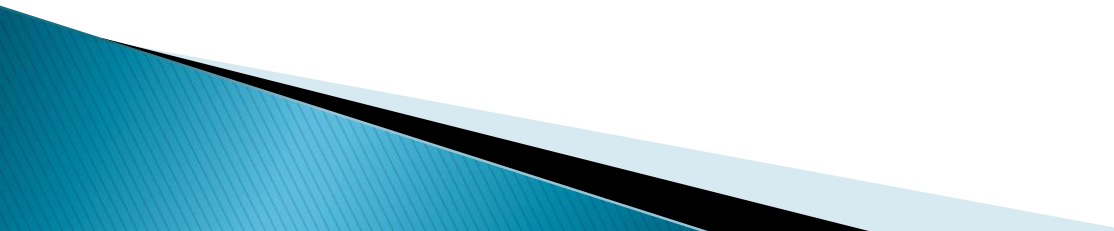
Why Study Psychology?

- ▶ To gain insight into behaviour
 - ▶ To acquire practical information
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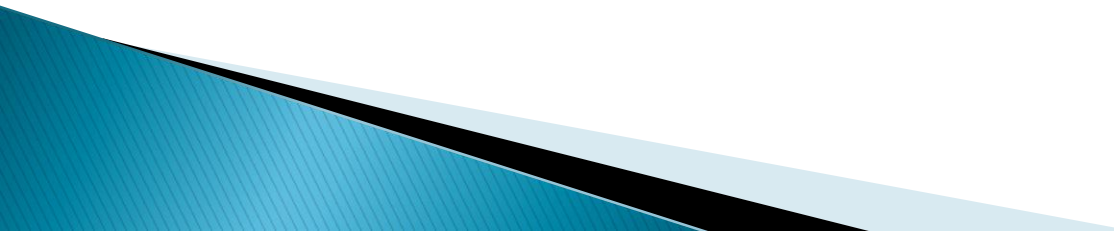
Gaining Insight into Behaviour

- ▶ Why do people dress like the people around them?
 - ▶ Why do young children watch movies or read certain books repeatedly?
 - ▶ Why do people develop bad habits?
 - ▶ Why do people break the law?
 - ▶ Why do people use drugs?
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Acquiring Practical Information

- ▶ How do I break my bad habits?
 - ▶ How do I house train my puppy?
 - ▶ How can I study more effectively?
 - ▶ How can I manage my stress better?
 - ▶ How can I get over the “winter blues”?
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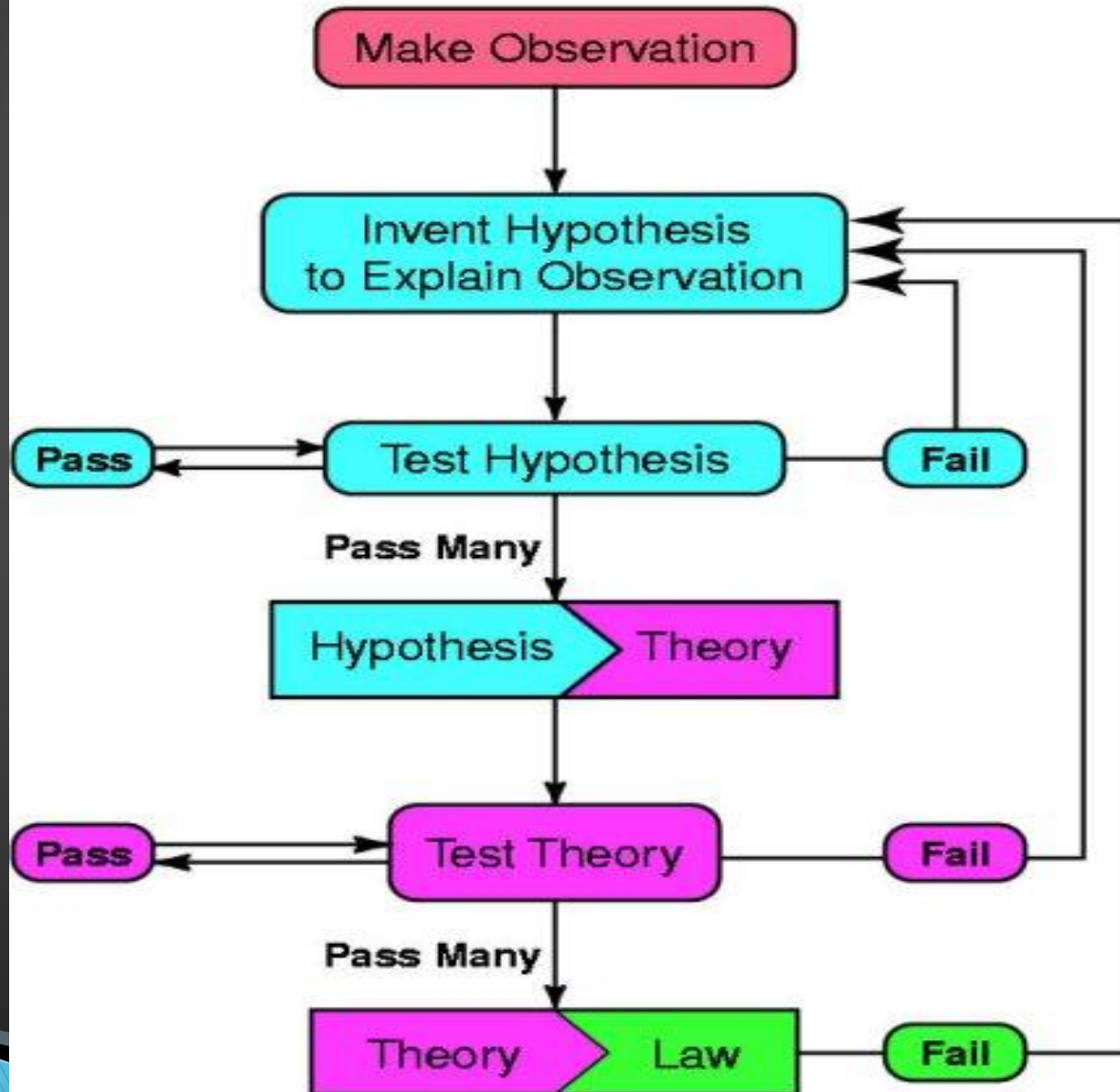
Overview of Psychology

- ▶ Scientific study of behaviour and mental processes.
 - ▶ What people think, feel and do.
 - ▶ Study of behaviour is systematic.
 - Basic science—for knowledge sake
 - Applied science—to correct a problem
 - Soft science—always exceptions to the rule.
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The Goals of Psychology

- ▶ **Describe** behaviour
 - Gather information
 - What is known presently about topic?
- ▶ **Explain** behaviour
 - Hypothesis—what do you think will happen if...
 - Theory—why behaviour results
- ▶ **Predict** behaviour
 - In crisis times
 - Criminals
- ▶ **Influence** behaviour
 - Mental illness
 - Bad habits

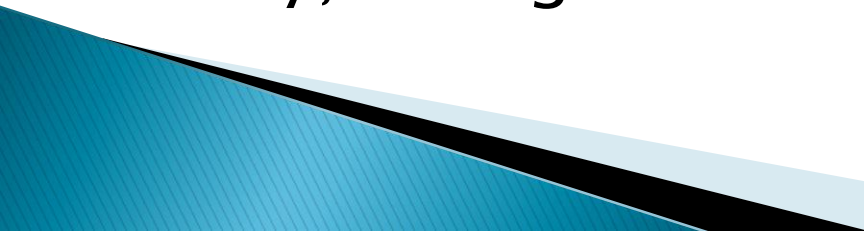
Scientific Method



Requirements of an Experiment

- ▶ Control
 - Group not receiving the independent variable
 - Necessary to compare experimental group to
- ▶ Independent Variable
 - Treatment or condition
- ▶ Dependent Variable
 - Outcome of experiment
- ▶ Confounds
 - Skew results
 - Maybe controllable—control for them!
 - Maybe uncontrollable—acknowledge them, retest.

For Example

- ▶ Question: Do PowerPoint presentations improve learning?
 - ▶ Experiment: Teach the same thing to one class by lecturing alone. Teach one group using PowerPoint. Test them at the end.
 - ▶ Independent variable: Whether the group got PPT or not
 - ▶ Dependent variable results on test.
 - ▶ Confounds: intelligence of group, time of day, changes teacher made in instruction...
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Practice

- ▶ In groups of 2:
 - Come up with a list of several questions about human behaviour you would like to investigate
 - For one of those questions, design an experiment. Identify:
 - Question, hypothesis, independent variable, dependent variable and as many confounds as you can think of.

Other Ways of Knowing

- ▶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTI0eF-WuMA>
 - ▶ Scientific method is systematic and objective. What are some problems with this?
 - ▶ Is the scientific method truly objective?
 - ▶ Is this what we want?
 - ▶ What are other ways we come to know things?
 - ▶ Why should we be cautious putting too much faith in the scientific method? Irony of this question?
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