

# Preface

*If psychology is a science, then it should be presented as a science.*

We live in an age in which science and technology have revolutionized the way we view the world, yet many students fail to realize that scientific methods can also be applied to the study of human behavior. While many students have no difficulty mastering numerous facts and principles, their behavior appears to be little changed by this experience—that is, there is little evidence that a first course in psychology has changed the way they interpret behavioral events. Perhaps this is because it is so difficult to remain objective about our behavior—and perhaps that is due, in part, to the ways in which texts present and support principles of psychology.

Throughout this text, we have attempted to actively involve students in the discovery process by inviting them to question assumptions and to participate in the scientific process of supporting or refuting ideas. Although the text is rich with content, it endeavors to bring students—and their own behavior—closer to the scientific process of observation and control.

The major goals of this textbook are to demonstrate to students how the science of psychology has evolved and how it continues to develop. We wanted to create a textbook that engages students in the scientific process by asking stimulating questions and demonstrating how scientific research proceeds in order to answer them. We believe it is important to show students how we know what we know by discussing principles of psychology in terms of the scientific context in which they are demonstrated. More important, we discuss the methods of research throughout the text as we present hundreds of classic and contemporary experiments in detail. Although we strive to present and interpret the most recent research available, we also discuss many older classic studies where they remain relevant.

Not all psychologists agree with a single approach to studying human behavior. Throughout this text, behavioral phenomena are discussed from different, and sometimes competing, perspectives. In cases in which the preponderance of evidence supports a particular perspective, we discuss the evidence for a stronger point of view. Psychology is a dynamic science, and other disciplines are continually adding to and changing our understanding. This is particularly evident in the rapidly evolving neural and biological sciences. Throughout this text we present the most recent and compelling biological perspectives when they are relevant.

## Special Features

What makes this text different from others that are also well grounded in current research is the way in which research is presented. Throughout each chapter, we attempt to demonstrate how research evolves from simple questions about behavior, often by asking students to think about how answers to questions might be found. Then we show how research, using a variety of methods, answers these questions. In some cases, research

does not lead to clear answers, and we discuss how to critically evaluate both sides of an issue. In many cases, we discuss how both the questions and the research are influenced by individual personalities and the political climate of the time. Psychology, like any other science, is a dynamic, social process within which our knowledge continually changes.

Because psychology can be presented from different theoretical perspectives, we have included several end-of-chapter interviews with prominent, influential psychologists to demonstrate these differences. These interviews also show students how researchers think about important issues and illustrate how controversy still surrounds much of this important discipline.

## New to This Edition

The 6th edition of *Essentials of Psychology: The Science of Behavior* is the most current introductory textbook available. It continues to present contrasting theoretical perspectives, while maintaining a strong scientific orientation to the study of psychology. For instance, while the text emphasizes a strong scientific perspective, it also presents competing points of view on several of the most important topics, including animal language, behavioral disorders and their treatment, and issues in social psychology. Some of the most noticeable changes to the 6th edition include the following:

- The addition of a section on sport psychology
- Updated statistics on drug use
- Research on hearing loss in teenagers from the use of ear buds
- New research on how sleep functions to maintain brain homeostasis
- New research on sensory memories and subliminal perception
- New research on eating disorders and their prevalence
- The role of epigenetics in the development of homosexuality
- New research on the development of telegraphic speech in infants
- Discussion of epigenetics and the nature-nurture argument
- Updated statistics on the prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome and marriage in the United States
- Revised discussion of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, its pathology, and its treatment
- Revised discussion of the pathology and treatment of schizophrenia
- New research on stereotype threat and sex differences
- Updated discussion of facial symmetry and physical attractiveness

These enhancements help ensure a textbook that will provide the most current introduction to the science of psychology and behavior.