

PREFACE

Goals of This Text

The mission foremost in the minds of many teachers of introductory psychology is to expose students to the theories and research that form the scientific background of psychology and to present this material in a way that students will find applicable to their own lives. However, in the process of providing this overview of psychology, it rapidly becomes apparent that the sheer multiplicity of studies, research areas, and approaches works against any coherent sense of psychology as a whole. What is needed is a way to integrate the subject matter of psychology that, by highlighting the connections between different research areas, enables students to appreciate the value of specialized studies while perceiving the coherence of psychology as a discipline.

My aim in this book is to accomplish this goal while also giving students an enduring sense of the *process* of psychology—of what scientific thinking about behavior is like—because it is this process that endures when specific findings are supplanted or specific theories outgrown. Thus, after reading this book, students should not only know about the specific content of psychology but also be able to question the basis for assertions, to appreciate the complexity of our attempts to understand behavior objectively, and to integrate information both *within* psychology and *between* psychology and other areas of study.

An additional goal of this book is to show how psychology can be brought to bear on the issue of diversity—the multicultural nature of our society, issues of gender and race, the widening rifts between different groups. These are issues that face us now and that will become increasingly important as we move into the 21st century. Psychology has a lot to say about these issues, and I take diversity seriously in this book by including in every chapter sustained explorations of what psychology, as a science, has to say about it.

How can we accomplish these goals within the context of an introductory psychology course? The first step is to present the facts, theories, and general principles of psychology in an engaging style that communicates clearly. The next step is to create a framework that will help (1) achieve integration, (2) develop an appreciation of the process of scientific thinking about behavior, and (3) cultivate an understanding of diversity. I will now consider in detail how this book works to achieve these goals.

Achieving Integration

The goal of achieving integration poses one of the greatest challenges to teaching introductory psychology. Human behavior is so complex and has so many facets that there is inevitably a tendency for psychology to become fragmented into

many easier-to-handle parts. So we typically talk about such topics as development, perception, biology, and social relationships as disparate areas of study. But in breaking the study of behavior into so many parts we make it difficult for students to see two aspects of the bigger picture: (1) Although development, perception, biology, and social relationships may be separate chapter headings in texts, in reality they are aspects of whole people, and (2) underlying the many parts of psychology is a coherent science.

Let's consider integration in more detail by posing some specific problems and then looking at the solutions offered by this text.

Integration Within Subareas of Psychology

Problem: Each chapter describes many studies of highly specific topics.

Solutions: (1) Studies are selected judiciously rather than encyclopedically, and summaries and transitions within chapters create a coherent story. (2) In most chapters a concept called Levels of Analysis (discussed below) is used to show the logic underlying psychologists' approach to solving problems within an area. (3) A **Reprise** at the end of each chapter reflects on the larger message of the chapter.

Integration Across Subareas of Psychology

Problem: Psychology is divided into areas of study corresponding roughly to the chapter headings in introductory texts.

Solution: Three features, *Levels of Analysis*, *Connections*, and *Follow-Through/Diversity*, help students synthesize information and break down the divisions between chapters.

- **Levels of Analysis:** The idea of levels of analysis is used throughout the text to explain how psychologists arrive at a fuller understanding of behavioral phenomena by employing several complementary approaches. Levels of analysis is introduced in Chapter 1, using the following common-sense description, easily understood by students: *Humans behave in ways that we can observe (behavioral level), and they think, remember, imagine, and solve problems (cognitive level). This behavior and thinking involves biological mechanisms (biological level), and all of these activities—behavior, thinking, and biological processes—take place within a physical and social context (contextual level). This context includes such aspects as the physical environment, the availability of social support, economic conditions, and society as a whole.* The underlying philosophy behind the levels of analysis approach is that (1) to fully understand a particular phenomenon we must study it at a number of levels, and (2) the levels interact with one another.

Levels of analysis is discussed at the beginning of each chapter, is reinforced as appropriate within the chapter (often with summary tables), and serves as the point of departure for a number of the chapter Reprises. The chapter on Stress and Health, for example, opens by describing how AIDS research has been approached not only at the biological level but at the behavioral, cognitive, and contextual levels.

- **Connections:** The Connections feature is used to show how the study of various topics cuts across chapter lines. To achieve this, a "connection indicator" like the one shown beside this paragraph appears in the margin to indicate that "the research you are reading about here is related to work described in another chapter." For example, when students read in the learning chapter about how learning principles are used in treating certain forms of psychological disorders, a connection indicator tells them that this material is related to material discussed in Chapter 17, Therapy. As students encounter these connection indicators throughout the book, they will begin to appreciate the interconnections between different lines of research.

- **Follow-Through/Diversity** is a standard section at the end of each chapter. In addition to highlighting psychology's contribution to the understanding of diversity, this feature shows how studies in a number of subareas work together to contribute to our understanding of issues relevant to culture, ethnicity, and gender. This feature is described in more detail below.

Integration Between Psychology and Other Disciplines

Problem: Psychology is itself a sprawling, multifaceted discipline, and yet it is not the only window on human life and behavior. Just as students have a hard time connecting the subareas of psychology, they also have a hard time seeing across disciplinary lines in their college education.

Solution: The **Interdisciplinary Dimensions** feature highlights linkages between psychology and other disciplines in the natural and social sciences, humanities, and professional studies. A one- to two-page interdisciplinary section is integrated into most chapters. All of the Interdisciplinary Dimensions are highlighted in the table of contents.

Developing an Appreciation of Scientific Thinking in Psychology

Problem: Many students come into the course believing that psychology is "only common sense" and have little appreciation of the logical subtleties of psychological research.

Solution: To help students appreciate the intricacies of achieving accurate, unbiased psychological knowledge, a clear and thorough introduction to the scientific method is presented in Chapter 2. This discussion highlights the logic of scientific thinking by relating examples within psychology to illustrations from other areas of study, such as physics, evolutionary biology, and medicine. The lessons in this chapter are then reinforced by a feature called **Measurement & Methodology** in each of the following chapters. This is a boxed feature that points out specific issues in measurement, experimental design, or methodology where appropriate. There are one to three Measurement & Methodology features in each chapter.

Cultivating an Understanding of Diversity

Problem: Although today's students are more diverse than ever, many do not fully appreciate the nature of the diversity within which they live. In today's society, discussions of human diversity are often both ideological and ill-informed. Students need and deserve something more than a superficial understanding of diversity.

Solution: As the science of behavior, psychology has more than slogans to offer about issues related to diversity. To avoid giving them only token recognition or an oversimplified treatment, this text considers these questions in a sustained and serious manner that does not slight the complexities. In addition to appropriate discussions within the chapters, we focus specifically on psychology's contribution to an understanding of the diversity afforded by culture, ethnicity, and gender with a two-page feature called **Follow-Through/Diversity** at the end of each chapter. For example, in the Follow-Through for the biology chapter we consider gender ("Sex hormones, brain structure, and behavior"); for cognition we consider culture ("Thinking in traditional cultures"); and for stress and health we focus on ethnicity ("Hypertension among African Americans"). Sometimes discussions in one chapter are linked to discussions in another. (For example, "Learning about gender roles" in the learning chapter is closely related to "Gender schemas and memory" in the memory chapter.) Since this feature "fol-