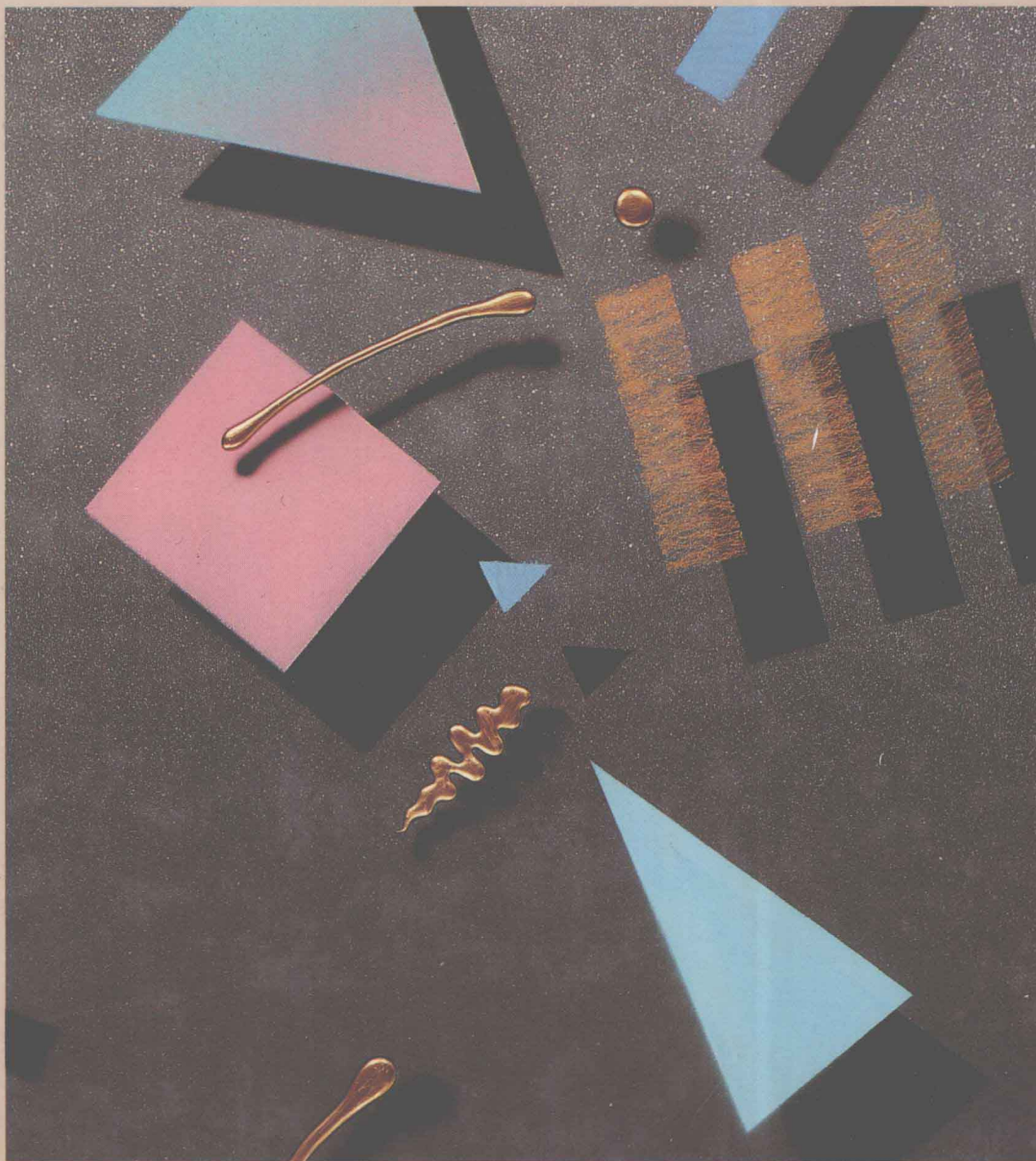


PSYCHOLOGY

THE ESSENTIAL SCIENCE



ROBERT A. BARON

Psychology

The Essential Science

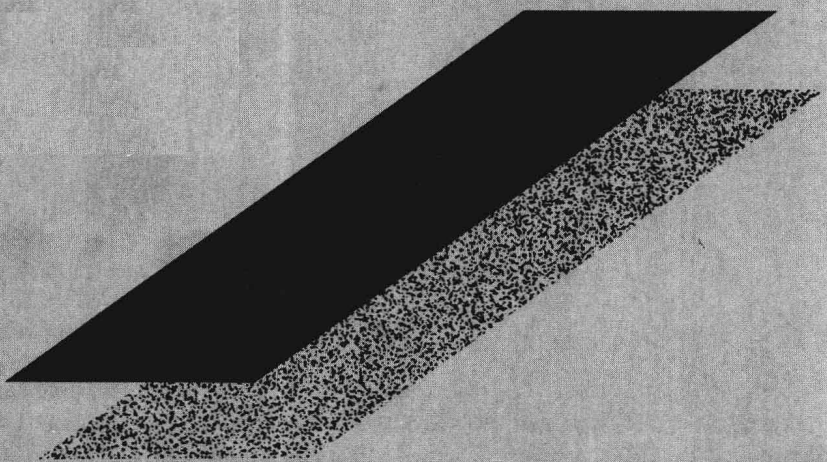
ALLYN AND BACON

Boston

London

Sydney

Toronto



Special project editor: Nancy Forsyth
Series editor: John-Paul Lenney
Production administrator: Peter Petraitis
Text design/art: Caliber Design Planning, Inc.
Photo research: Laurel Anderson/Photosynthesis
Cover coordinator: Linda Dickinson
Composition buyer: Linda Cox
Manufacturing buyer: Bill Alberti

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baron, Robert A.

Psychology : the essential science.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Psychology. I. Title.

BF121.B32 1989 150 88-26262
 ISBN 0-205-11432-6

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 93 92 91 90 89 88

Credits:

Photo credits:

Photos by John Curtis & David Dempster styled by Photosynthesis. **CHAPTER ONE** PAGE 6 (L-R) The Archives of American Psychology. Pg. 12L; J. Simon/The Picture Cube, C; M. Greenlar/The Picture Group, R; D. Budnick/Woodfin Camp & Associates. Pg. 15; Comstock. Pg. 17; L.L. Rue/Photo-Researchers Inc. Pg. 18; Courtesy Hunt Manufacturing Co. Pg. 24; John Curtis. Pg. 26; H. Morgan/Photo-Researchers Inc. **CHAPTER TWO** Pg. 33 L; R. Stuckey/Comstock, TR; J. Curtis, BR; L. Migdale/Photo-Researchers Inc. Pg. 34; M.C. Werner/Comstock. Pg. 35 L-R; Pierce & McCoy/Rainbow. Pg. 46T; Mazziota/Photo-Researchers Inc, B; P. Lynch/Photo-Researchers Inc. Pg. 48; Courtesy Dr. Neal Miller/Yale University. Pg. 53; J.B. O'Rourke/The Stock Market. Pg. 58; The Kobal Collection/Super Stock. Pg. 59; D. McCoy/Rainbow. Pg. 60L; T. Nebbia/Woodfin Camp & Associates, R; Reynolds Photography. **CHAPTER THREE** Pg. 74; B. Bachman/Photo-Researchers Inc. Pg. 76; D. Dempster/Off-Shoot. Pg. 77; The Kobal Collection/Superstock. Pg. 91 L; K. McCarthy/Off-Shoot, R; S. Uzell/The Stock Market. Pg. 92 L, R; D. Dempster/Off-Shoot. Pg. 97; Art Resource. Pg. 100; MOMA Film Stills Archive. **CHAPTER FOUR** Pg. 107; J. Curtis. Pg. 114; Biomedical Communications/Photo-Researchers Inc. Pg. 118; Bettmann Newsphotos. Pg. 122; G. Adler/Shooting Star. Pg. 123; J. Curtis. Pg. 128 T, B; J. Curtis. Pg. 130; North Wind Picture Archive (Inset; D. Dempster). **CHAPTER FIVE** Pg. 137 TL; B. Daemmrich, BL; Keller & Peet, R; J. Curtis. Pg. 140; J. Curtis. Pg. 142 L, R; K. McCarthy/Off-Shoot. Pg. 143; D. Dempster/Off-Shoot. Pg. 148; J. Curtis. Pg. 150 T; H. Morgan/Photo-Researchers Inc., B; S. Seitz/Woodfin Camp & Associates. Pg. 151;

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To Bill and Sandra—
two people who recognize my strengths
and overlook my faults

Preface

On Doing and Teaching Psychology: Reflections of a Smiling Workaholic



We live in an age of word processors and desk-top publishing. Yet, despite these modern marvels, books are still written by people, not by machines. Since they are, books must necessarily reflect the skills, experience, and nature of their authors. *Psychology: The Essential Science* is certainly no exception to this rule. This book consciously reflects a theme that has been central to my entire career as a psychologist, one I can best summarize as follows: *There is absolutely, positively no substitute for hard work—but a touch of humor, too, can have its place.* In short, I have always believed that hard work is the most essential ingredient in a serious, scientific field such as psychology, and that an occasional smile can provide a much-needed boost to both affect and motivation. (I should add that a considerable body of research findings lend support to this view. Such research—including several studies I have conducted myself—indicates that humor can indeed exert a wide range of beneficial effects in many different contexts.)

Over the years I have applied this belief to teaching, writing, and even to research. Twenty years into my career as a teacher of psychology, I still work hard at preparing lectures, and still view my central task as that of stretching the minds of students. Yet I am also well known on campus for using (at unpredictable intervals) amusing illustrations that make important points about behavior.

While conducting research, I have always viewed myself as a serious scientist and have published scores of papers in leading journals. Most of this work has been programmatic in nature, and has dealt with serious topics such as procedures for reducing human aggression or (more recently) techniques for the effective resolution of organizational conflicts. On occasion, though, I've delved into questions of a somewhat lighter nature (e.g., Can humor play a beneficial role in negotiations? Should applicants wear perfume or cologne to job interviews?) In short, in my research, as in my teaching, I have always been committed to hard and careful work, but I have also found value in an occasional bit of whimsy.

The same basic theme—mounds of hard work with a dash of humor on the side—lies at the heart of the present text. On the one hand, I can honestly say that I have endeavored to make this book an accurate and comprehensive overview of psychology in the late 1980s. On the other hand, though, I have featured the lighter side of our field on occasion. To repeat, in a very real sense this text reflects not only my experience and nature, but also my personal approach to doing and teaching psychology.

Major Goals of This Text and How I Sought to Attain Them

Supported by a great deal of research on the value of goal-setting, I firmly endorse the view that it's easier to get somewhere if you know where you are going. Consistent with

this view, I established several concrete goals—and strategies for attaining them—*before* beginning work on this text. The most important of these were as follows:

(1) Present a Broad, Accurate, and Up-to-Date Picture of Our Field.

This goal is one shared by most, if not all, authors of introductory texts. I do feel, though, that I have taken some special steps to attain it and that my personal background and experience have been very helpful in these efforts.

First, I should note that before preparing each chapter I obtained detailed input and suggestions from dozens of colleagues. These individuals kindly offered their views about the ideal content of each unit, suggested how it should be organized, and called my attention to important new lines of research. I paid close attention to these suggestions (as well to extensive reviews of each chapter after it was drafted) and feel that doing so has definitely helped me to attain the breadth, accuracy, and currency referred to above.

Second, my own broad set of professional experiences has proven invaluable to me in preparing a text that really does reflect the tremendous scope of modern psychology. I began my graduate career with basic training in experimental psychology. Later, I shifted into social psychology and worked in this area for a dozen years. During that period, though, I held two faculty positions in which I taught courses in developmental psychology, and I also conducted research on such topics as the impact of televised violence on young children. From 1979 to 1981 I served as a program director at the National Science Foundation. This provided me with a unique opportunity to gain wide exposure to virtually all areas of our field. Finally, in recent years, I have taught courses and conducted research in the area of industrial/organizational psychology. I feel that these experiences have helped me to prepare a text that does indeed provide an unusually broad introduction to the scope of modern psychology.

With respect to accuracy and currency, this is where the workaholic part of my personal nature played a positive role. I prepared each chapter with the relevant books and journals right on the desk beside me. The result: more than 30 percent of the references cited in this text are from 1985 or later, and many are from 1987 and even 1988.

(2) Present a Balanced Picture of Modern Psychology.

By “balanced” I mean three things: balance between what are sometimes known as the “hard” and “soft” areas of our field, balance between psychology as a science and psychology as a source of practical knowledge, and balance between new work on the cutting edge of our field and work that is now viewed as classic. Here, my experience in several areas of our field, and in both applied and basic research, has been helpful.

(3) Present Psychology in a Readable and Understandable Manner.

Prior to preparing this text, I have authored or co-authored some sixteen different books. One thing I’ve learned from this extensive writing experience is the following: a text students don’t read and can’t understand is of little value. Accordingly I’ve made concerted efforts to write this one with three major themes in mind:

(a) Never leave students wondering why anyone would be interested in this stuff. In other words, always try to explain the larger issues behind specific studies or lines of research, as well as the practical implications these may have.

(b) Never load a page or section with so many facts that the main points soon drop from view.

(c) Never add so many provisos and disclaimers that students conclude psychologists are incapable of giving straight answers and give up in despair. This last point, by the way, does not imply that I have glossed over complexities or inconsistencies in existing data. Rather, it means that wherever possible I've tried to offer at least *tentative* conclusions or suggestions.

(4) Represent Recent Major Trends in Our Field.

Psychology is everchanging, and I feel strongly that it is an author's duty to reflect trends whenever possible. Consistent with this approach, I've tried to take account of two major shifts in our field throughout the book: (1) Growing interest in cognition and cognitive processes, and (2) Growing interest in the application of psychological knowledge. Both trends were emphasized by colleagues who provided input on the text (both in the planning and draft stage), and both are represented in many chapters—wherever it seemed appropriate to introduce them.

Some Special Features of Psychology: The Essential Science

In recent years introductory psychology texts have become replete with a wide array of special features. Some of these seem quite useful; others appear to have been added without much concern for their ultimate value. *Psychology: The Essential Science*, too, has several unique features. All, however, are included for two reasons: first, they reflect my personal beliefs (based on my twenty years of teaching experience) that they do indeed add something “extra”—they enhance the appeal or value of the text to students. Second, they were recommended or endorsed by many colleagues with extensive teaching experience who also felt they would be helpful. The most important of these features are summarized below.

(1) Representation of Recent Advances and New Lines of Research.

Psychology as a discipline has become so diverse, that representing all new findings and lines of research within the covers of a single text is all but impossible. I have tried, though, to include a sample of very recent work in each chapter. A small sample of these topics includes:

Physiological processes occurring during persuasion
Techniques for studying the living brain
Dominance and interpersonal attraction
Taste and odor perception in newborns
Cognitive mechanisms in the perception of pain
Sex differences in fantasies and daydreams
Thermoregulatory mechanisms and sleep
Counting by animals
Evidence suggesting that eyewitness testimony *is* often accurate
How alcohol affects memory
Heuristics in decision-making

Escalation of commitment in performance appraisal
Overconfidence in decision-making
Serial marriage
New evidence concerning the benefits of breast-feeding infants
Mood swings in adolescence
Effects of fragrance in work settings
The role of opioid peptides in eating disorders
Motivational factors in political leadership
Individual differences in affect intensity
Interviewers' mood and the evaluation of job applicants
Daily hassles as a source of stress
Effects of stress on decision-making
Self-monitoring and social behavior
Causes and effects of shyness
Self-focused attention and depression
New forms of family therapy
The dose-effect relationship in psychotherapy
Cultural differences in psychotherapy
Biases and errors in social cognition
Human factors in product design
Goal-setting and work motivation
Psychology and public health: Coping with AIDS

(2) Special Sections.

Three distinct types of special sections are included. The first two echo one aspect of the quest for balance described above: they represent efforts to highlight what is brand new in psychology and what is widely considered to be classic material. These sections are labeled, respectively, *Focus on Research: The Cutting Edge*, and *Focus on Research: Classic Contributions*.

The third type of section, *The Point of It All*, calls attention to potential or actual applications of psychological knowledge. As the title suggests, such inserts are designed to help answer one perennial question posed by students: What's the point of all this, anyway?

I should add that all special sections are clearly cited in the text so that their relevance to text materials is clear, and all appear at the end of sections, so they do not interrupt the reader's progress through each chapter.

(3) Special Treatment of All Illustrations.

A great deal of attention had been devoted to the illustrations. All graphs, tables, and charts were specially created for this text—none are simply redrawn or borrowed from journal articles. All contain the special labeling feature I originated more than ten years ago—the labels call a reader's attention to the key points being made and the key findings

being illustrated in the chart. Photos and cartoons really *do* fit. They were chosen by me as the book was being written and each is tied closely to the points being made.

(4) Photos of Major Contributors to Our Field.

The inside front and back endpapers display portraits of many famous figures in psychology. Again, in the interests of balance, both historical and current contributors are included. Students often express interest in knowing what the famous psychologists look (or looked) like, so many will find this an interesting feature. The persons represented were chosen on the basis of a survey of more than five hundred psychologists. I conducted this survey with the aid of the publisher, Allyn and Bacon.

Some Concluding Words . . . And a Plea for Help

Those are the major goals I've sought and some of the steps I've taken to reach them. Looking back, I do feel that I've made at least measurable progress toward all of them. However, only you—my colleagues and readers—can determine whether, and to what extent, I've succeeded. I conclude, therefore, with a sincere request for help. Your comments, suggestions, and feedback will prove invaluable to me in many ways, and I would greatly appreciate receiving them. Please don't hesitate; share your reactions with me in any form you wish, and as often as you like. I really will take them carefully to heart—I really *will* listen!

Robert A. Baron

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Acknowledgments

Some Words of Thanks

Writing is a solitary task, and authors must spend much of their time isolated from the joys (and sorrows) of human contact. Converting the author's words into a book such as this one, though, requires the coordinated efforts of many individuals. In preparing this text I have been assisted by a large number of outstanding, talented people. While I can't possibly hope to thank all of them here, I'd like to express my appreciation to a few of those whose help has been most valuable.

First, my sincere thanks to the colleagues listed below. Those in the first group participated in focus groups during the initial planning stages of this book. Their insightful comments about teaching introductory psychology have guided me throughout the development of the text. I appreciate their candor and their willingness to share their teaching experiences and concerns. Those in the second group responded to questionnaires I mailed before writing a single word. Their suggestions about the content and features of the book were invaluable to me in planning and then preparing a text that reflects the current needs and preferences of many persons teaching introductory psychology. Colleagues listed in the third group read and commented upon various portions of the manuscript as I wrote them. Their suggestions were uniformly thoughtful, constructive, and informative, and this book has benefitted greatly from them in many ways.

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Second, I wish to extend my gratitude to those scholars who provided me with photographs and responded to questionnaires on their work and who are featured on the endsheets as Masters of Psychology.

Third, I wish to express my appreciation to Nancy Forsyth, Alicia Reilly, and all the other members of the Special Projects Team at Allyn and Bacon—Sandi Kirshner, Diana Murphy, Susan Lewis, Carol Lou Kennedy, Ron Sohn, and Leslie Genser—for their help in countless ways. Their unflagging enthusiasm and virtual barrage of good suggestions have improved the final product in many ways, and I'm deeply indebted to them.

Fourth, my special thanks to Nancy Murphy for an outstanding and thoughtful job of copyediting on the entire manuscript. Her suggestions for changes in my prose, for additional illustrations, and for many other revisions were invaluable and added a fresh perspective to many portions of the text.

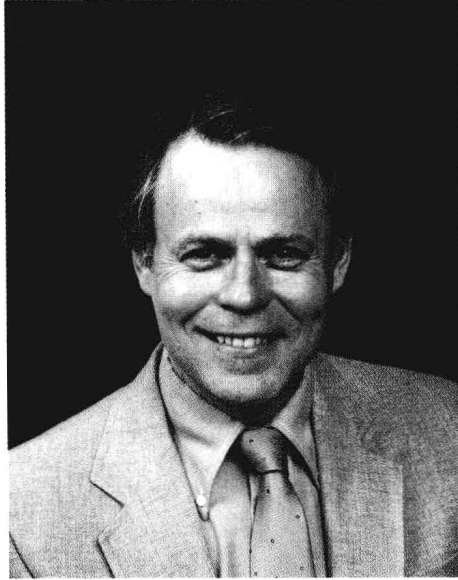
Fifth, I wish to thank Peter Petraitis, Paula Carroll, and the other members of the production team for guiding the book through a very complex production process so efficiently, for selecting an attractive internal design, and for devising such a striking cover. All in all, I feel this is the most attractive text with which I've ever been associated.

Sixth, I wish to express my deep appreciation to my good friend Bill Barke for all his support. It's really fair to say that without his confidence in me and in my understanding of psychology, the project would never have come to pass. And, of course, my sincere thanks to John-Paul Lenney, who served as my editor once the book was under way. It has been a pleasure working with him, and I look forward to doing so many more times in the future.

Finally, my warm thanks to Paul Paulus, Susan Green, Gene Smith, Chuck Hinderliter, and Ann Weber for their friendship and for their hard and excellent work in preparing the Study Guide, Instructor's Resource Manual, and Test Banks. These ancillary items are an extremely important part of the total project, and I am deeply indebted to those fine colleagues for their help.

To all these truly outstanding people, and to many others as well, my warmest personal regards and appreciation.

About The Author



Robert A. Baron is currently Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychology, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. A Fellow of the American Psychological Association since 1978, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1968). Professor Baron has held faculty appointments at the University of South Carolina, Purdue University, the University of Minnesota, University of Texas, and Princeton University; he has won numerous awards for teaching excellence at these institutions. In addition, Professor Baron has been a Research Associate at the Fels Research Institute and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford (England). From 1979 to 1981 he served as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation.

Professor Baron has published more than eighty articles in professional journals. He has served on the editorial boards of numerous journals (e.g., the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Aggressive Behavior*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*), and is the author or co-author of some sixteen different texts in psychology. His book *Human Aggression* is considered to be a “classic,” and his text *Social Psychology* (with Donn Byrne) has been the leading book in its field for many years. His texts on organizational psychology (*Behavior in Organizations*) and on human relations (*Understanding Human Relations*) have been widely adopted. Together, books by Professor Baron have been used by more than one million students.

At the present time Professor Baron’s major research interests focus on applying the principles and findings of psychology to understanding behavior in work settings. His recent projects have dealt with such topics as techniques for reducing organizational conflict, and how the mood of interviewers affects their ratings of job applicants.

A long-time runner, Professor Baron’s hobbies include woodworking, enjoying fine food, and music.

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