**Burrhus Frederic** (**B. F.**) **Skinner** (March 20, 1904 – August 18, 1990) was an American [psychologist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologist), [behaviorist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behaviorist), author, inventor, and [social philosopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_philosophy).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-Smith_Woodward-1)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-W2-2)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-BFD-3)[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-4) He was the Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at [Harvard University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_University) from 1958 until his retirement in 1974.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-5)

Skinner believed that human free will is an illusion and that any human action is the result of the consequences of the same action. If the consequences are bad, there is a high chance that the action will not be repeated; however if the consequences are good, the actions that led to it will become more probable.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-6) Skinner called this the principle of reinforcement.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-7) The use of reinforcement to strengthen behavior he called [operant conditioning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operant_conditioning). As his main tool for studying operant conditioning Skinner invented the [operant conditioning chamber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operant_conditioning_chamber), also known as the Skinner Box.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-8)

Skinner developed his own philosophy of science called [radical behaviorism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_behaviorism),[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-AB-9) and founded a school of experimental research psychology—the [experimental analysis of behavior](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experimental_analysis_of_behavior). His analysis of human behavior culminated in his work [*Verbal Behavior*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verbal_Behavior), as well as his philosophical manifesto [*Walden Two*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walden_Two), both of which[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] still stimulate considerable experimental research and clinical application.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-10) Contemporary academia considers Skinner a pioneer of modern behaviorism along with [John B. Watson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_B._Watson) and [Ivan Pavlov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Pavlov).

Skinner emphasized *rate of response* as a dependent variable in psychological research. He invented the *cumulative recorder* to measure response rate as part of his highly influential work on schedules of [reinforcement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reinforcement).[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-BO-11)[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-SR-12) In a June 2002 survey, Skinner was listed as the most influential psychologist of the 20th century.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-13) He was a prolific author who published 21 books and 180 articles.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-14)[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner#cite_note-15)