

B. F. Skinner & Behaviorism's Take on Personality

- ✓ For Skinner, *personality is behavior* and behavior is determined by principles of operant conditioning which focuses on the relationship of behavior to the environment.
- ✓ Mental processes and structures are not important in determining a link between behavior and its controlling environmental conditions (see Skinner quote at right).
- ✓ For Skinner, free will is an illusion, and in his strong determinism he contends that behavior is fully determined by environmental stimuli.
- ✓ The consistency that is observed in the behavior of individuals is the result of the development of stable *response tendencies*. These tendencies, acquired through experience, may change in the future as a result of new experience but they are enduring enough to create a certain amount of consistency in a person's behavior.
- ✓ Implicitly, therefore, Skinner may be said to view personality as a *collection of response tendencies that are tied to various stimulus situations* and may vary in strength depending on past conditioning.



“The process of looking inside the organism for an explanation of behavior has tended to obscure the variables which are immediately available for a scientific analysis. These variables lie outside the organism, in its immediate environment and in its environmental history....The objection to inner states is not that they do not exist, but that they are not relevant.”

B. F. Skinner