

1999

# John Broadus Watson

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## Recommended Citation

Bufford, Rodger K., "John Broadus Watson" (1999). *Faculty Publications - Grad School of Clinical Psychology*. 303.  
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**Watson, John Broadus** (1878–1958). Father of American behavioral psychology. Born and reared in Greenville, South Carolina, he received an M.A. from Furman University and then went to the University of Chicago, where he received his Ph.D. in 1903 and remained as an instructor. In 1908 Watson left Chicago for Johns Hopkins. Forced to resign from Johns Hopkins in 1920 due to adverse publicity about his divorce, he subsequently entered the advertising business.

While he was in Chicago, Watson began studying the relationship between animal and human behavior and helped found an animal laboratory. This work was continued at Johns Hopkins. The first published statement of his behaviorist views was in an article entitled "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (1913). Watson's most important books include *Behavior, an Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (1914), *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (1919), and a semipopular book, *Behaviorism* (1925).

Watson led the revolt against introspection, the study of conscious experience, which then dominated American psychology. He noted that intro-

spection is not suited to the study of animals. An avowed materialist, he objected to concepts such as mind, consciousness, volition, and emotion, stating that psychology should be the science of directly observable behavior. Watson advocated direct observations of behavior and adopted the conditioned reflex method of Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov.

A strong environmentalist, Watson believed that the conditioned reflex is the basic learning mechanism. His conditioned reflex method has come to be known as classical conditioning or respondent conditioning.

B. F. Skinner's research indicates that most behavior is operant rather than reflexive in nature and that the conditioned reflex plays a much more minor role than Watson believed. Genetic and other biological factors also clearly play a much larger role than Watson recognized. However, strict materialism and emphasis on the study of observable behavior continue to characterize modern behaviorism, and Watson's role as the founder of American behaviorism remains secure.

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*See* BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY; CONDITIONING, CLASSICAL.