



Beyond the Box: B.F. Skinner's Technology of Behaviour from Laboratory to Life, 1950s-1970s

Alexandra Rutherford



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B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) is one of the most famous and influential figures in twentieth century psychology. A best-selling author, inventor, and social commentator, Skinner was both a renowned scientist and a public intellectual known for his controversial theories of human behavior. *Beyond the Box* is the first full-length study of the ways in which Skinner's ideas left the laboratory to become part of the post-war public's everyday lives, and chronicles both the enthusiasm and caution with which this process was received.

Using selected case studies, Alexandra Rutherford provides a fascinating account of Skinner and his acolytes' attempts to weave their technology of human behavior into the politically turbulent fabric of 1950s-70s American life. To detail their innovative methods, Rutherford uses extensive archival materials and interviews to study the Skinnerians' creation of human behavior laboratories, management programs for juvenile delinquents, psychiatric wards, and prisons, as well as their influence on the self-help industry with popular books on how to quit smoking, lose weight, and be more assertive.

A remarkable look at a post-war scientific and technological revolution, *Beyond the Box* is a rewarding study of how behavioral theories met real-life problems, and the ways in which Skinner and his followers continue to influence the present.



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