

How Our Worlds get their Functions: An Introduction to Relational Frame Theory

Emily K. Sandoz, Ph.D

Behavior analysts have long noted the importance of accounting for verbal contingencies in the analysis of human behavior. Prediction and influence of many significant human behaviors seems to require some account of how it is that stimuli seem to acquire functions absent a direct learning history consistent with basic respondent or operant processes. Relational Frame Theory (RFT) is an effort to understand this aspect of human behavior without appealing to mentalism. RFT purports derived relational responding as a generalized operant that involves the transformation of stimulus functions consistent with contextually controlled relations amongst stimuli. In short, humans can learn to relate any to stimulate in any number of ways, depending on the context. And, as a result, those stimuli come to evoke and consequate different behaviors, again depending on the context. This mini-workshop will focus on extending analyses of complex human behavior without abandoning the behavioral perspective.