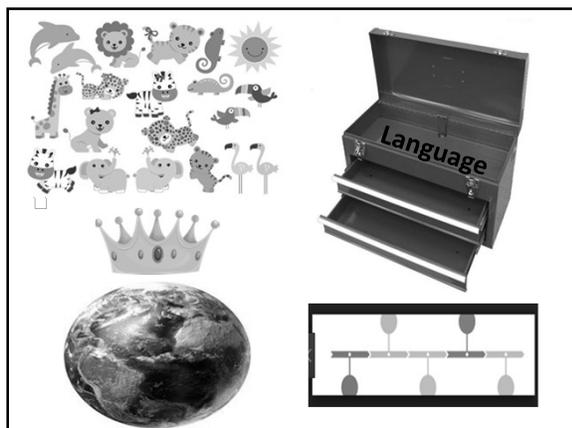


Iowa Department of Human Services

Relational Frame Theory: An Introduction

Susan Smith
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Iowa's Technical Assistance and Behavior Supports



Advantages

- Enables communication
- Language is at the core of virtually all complex human abilities
 - thinking
 - Imagining
 - remembering
 - self-awareness
 - perspective taking

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

Advantages

- Avoid terrible consequences by following rules and advise
- Facilitates creation through mathematical formulas and physical laws
- Compare, analyze, evaluate, and plan
- Hope and motivation to persevere in trying times
- Builds alliances

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

Advantages

- Provokes insight
- Expresses empathy
- Teaches concepts
- Shapes new skills
- Guides therapeutic interventions

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

Dark Side of Language



- "Language can transform a harmless object into a terrifying threat;
- Imagination can become indistinguishable from reality;
- A memory of a long-gone trauma can open fresh wounds;
- Anticipation of an improbable outcome can become a barrier to happiness.

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

More Disadvantages

- Worry about catastrophic outcomes
- Ruminates over past transgressions
- Endorse delusional beliefs
- Ascribe blame
- Defend perfectionistic standards
- Doubt that our lives have meaning

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016



Relational Frame Theory



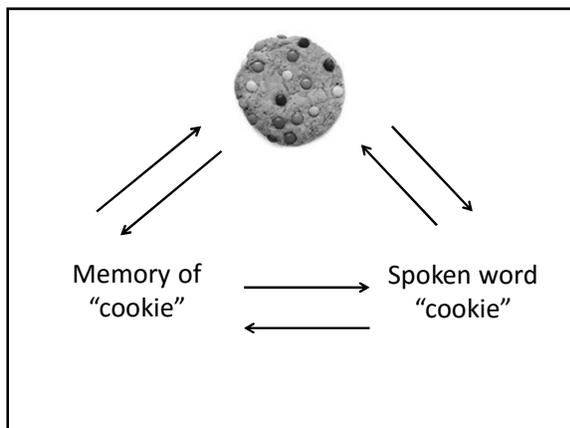
RFT is a Post-Skinnerian psychological theory about human language and cognition.

- It is based on principles of learning
- Language is the process of learning to relate things based on symbols, which in turn transforms the way we learn and the way we experience the world.

Stimulus Equivalence



- Humans, unlike animals, have a strong tendency to relate a neutral event to an important event, even though the former has always followed the latter.
- Respondent conditioning is often radically different for verbally-able humans than for all other animals.



Infinite Number of Potential Relations

- Equivalence
- Bigger/smaller
- Better/worse
- More/less important
- Higher/lower
- Part of/not part of
- Etc., etc., etc., etc., etc.....

Journal of Autism & Related Disabilities **Austin Publishing Group**

Review Article
Teaching Important Relational Skills for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability Using Freely Available (GO-IRAP) Software

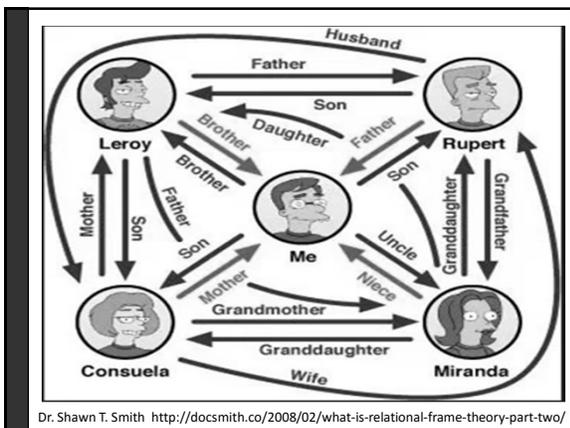
- PEAK (Promoting Emergent Advanced Knowledge)
- TARPA (Training & Assessment of Relational Precursors & Abilities)
 - Ability, speed, reversals correlated with higher IQ

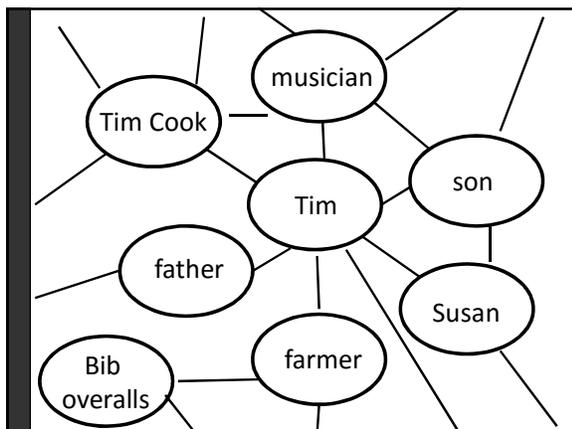
SOFTWARE

- IRAP (Implicit Relational Assessment Procedure)
 Stereotypes/predjudice, e.g. race, sexual orientation, age, attractiveness, etc.
- T-IRAP (Teacher – IRAP)
 - Teaching relational responding with children dx'd with ASD
 - “high” and “low” functioning
- GO-IRAP (Ghent Odyssey - IRAP)
 - Advanced teaching tool; Assesses and teaches; Software/Manual – FREE-OF-CHARGE

Trained Relations	Derived Stimulus Relations
Tim is > Susan	Susan is < Tim
Shirley is > Tim	Tim is < Shirley Shirley is > Susan Susan is < Shirley
Rodney is > than Shirley	Shirley is < Rodney Rodney is > Tim Tim is < Rodney Rodney is > Susan Susan is < Rodney
Amy is < Susan	Susan is > Amy Amy is < Tim Tim is > Amy Amy is < Shirley Shirley is > Amy Amy is < Rodney Rodney is > Amy

Amy Susan Tim Shirley Rodney

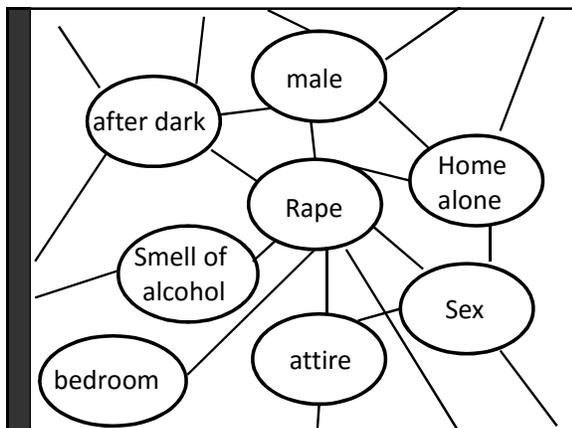




Transformation of Stimulus Function

The functions a stimulus has for a person can be **transformed** or **changed** on the basis of how it is related to other stimuli.

A diagram showing a central image of a cookie. Two arrows point from the cookie to the text 'Memory of "cookie"', and two arrows point from the text back to the cookie. Similarly, two arrows point from the cookie to the text 'Spoken word "cookie"', and two arrows point from the text back to the cookie. A horizontal arrow points from 'Memory of "cookie"' to 'Spoken word "cookie"', and another horizontal arrow points back.



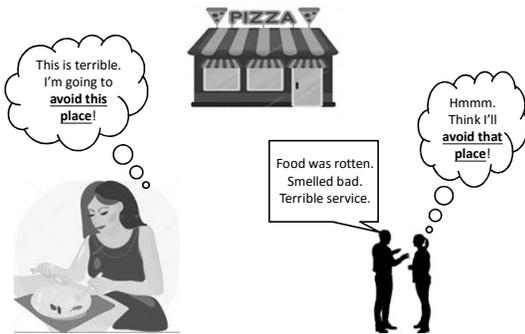
Arbitrarily Applicable Relational Responding

Learned relational responding that can come under the control of:



- arbitrary contextual cues
 - Relation has been applied by the verbal community
 - runs counter to formal dimensions of the stimuli
- not solely the formal properties
- nor direct experience with them

Direct Contingencies/Rule-Governed



- Rules
 - From society / others
 - In order to be "normal", I must be "happy".
 - From ourselves
 - I should always....
 - I must never....
- Rules play an important role in the emotional lives of human beings.
- From RFT perspective, understanding how rules influence one's mental suffering requires an understanding of:
 - Conceptualized self
 - Self as Context
 - Self as Content

Coming To Your Senses

1. Mental
 - Observe
 - Label
2. Present Moment
 - Observe
 - Label




- Gradually increase intervals, intensity
- Gradually decrease external prompts

REPEAT

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Mastering the Clinical Conversation
Language as Intervention

Matthew Villatte,
Jennifer L. Villatte, and Steven C. Hayes

An increased understanding of verbal behavior is incredibly important in psychological therapy




Language isn't a vehicle for therapeutic intervention, it IS the intervention.

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

RFT in therapy includes:

- Developing an awareness of the processes that overshadow useful contingencies, and
- To be attentive to the contexts that promote or undermine those processes

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

Tracking

- What were you thinking when you purchased the alcohol?
- What was different about today that resulted in you being able to successfully ____?
- What as the outcome of doing ____?
- How did that effect your relationship with __?
- What did you notice when you applied this strategy?

Maintaining Consequences

- Not always a matter of "avoidance"
- Many ineffective behaviors seem to be an instance of approach toward a positively reinforcing consequence which leaves the person stuck, away from more meaningful goals.
 - Being "right"
 - Seeking sensations
 - Feeling in control

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes, 2016

Types of Symbolic Relationships

- Coordination
- Distinction
- Opposition
- Comparison
- Hierarchy
- Perspective

Conditional Framing

- Helps the client evaluate the effectiveness or impact of behaviors
 - If you *did* do that, what do you think you'd feel?
- Understand the motivation of others
 - What do you think your father *hoped* would happen when he did that?

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

Comparative Framing

Useful in evaluating effectiveness of alternative actions

- What is most effective between getting up and staying in bed?
- Do you feel more, or less, stressed after drinking alcohol?



Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

Oppositional Framing

A relation of opposition between two events

- Helps the client to convert cues that have historically triggered ineffective behavior into effective behavior
 - What would you do if this were not a problem, but an opportunity?
 - What if urges were a sign that you can do something that matters instead of using drugs?
- Can help clients infer more about their motivation
 - What if the urge to run away is a sign that you want something in this situation?
 - What if we were to flip that over and say, what does that tell you about what you would like to have in your life?



Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

Deictic Framing

- Based on symbolic relationships that imply points of view linked to person, time or place
- Puts difficult sources of control at a psychological distance
 - If you were me, what might you say to yourself?
 - How do you think __ feels, hearing that?
 - What would you think if you heard what you just said from one of your friends?

 - What is one piece of advice you might pass back from a distant, wiser future you?
 - Looking back at yourself as a child, what would you say?

 - Change spatial perspective, e.g. empty chair, etc.

Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

Hierarchical Framing

- When the hole is overwhelming or blurring useful qualities, hierarchical descriptions that break down the whole can create useful contact with the grit and grain of the moment.
- What value would this action [behavior] be part of?
- What other things could you do to serve the same purpose?
- What is the smallest action you could do it that direction?



Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

Analogical Framing (Analogies & Metaphors)

- Establishing a relation of coordination between two sets of relations
- Allows the dominate features of a well known relation to be seen in relation in which they are missing or weaker
- Can promote symbolic functional generalization
- Did you just drink a six-pack?



Villatte, Villatte, & Hayes 2016

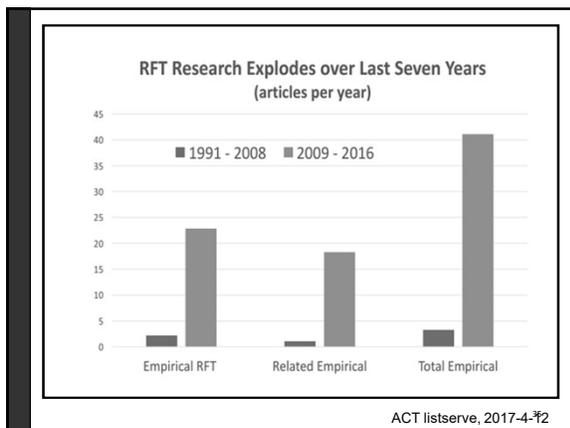


Relies on Recipes



Relies on Principles





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