

PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AS RELATIONAL RESPONDING: A DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

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The current paper is concerned with an alternative operant account of perspective-taking based on a modern behavioral approach to human language and cognition called Relational Frame Theory. The present paper reports 3 studies that investigate the development of perspective-taking in terms of these 3 relational frames. In Study 1, 5 age groups of participants ranging from early childhood to adulthood were exposed to a protocol assessing their abilities to respond to relational perspective-taking tasks. The findings from Study 1 overall indicated that accuracy increased as a function of age. Studies 2 and 3 were subsequently conducted as controls. Study 2 was employed to determine whether the low rates of accuracy recorded with the youngest group of participants in Study 1 was simply a function of the length of the statements contained within some of the tasks. In Study 3 an automated version of the protocol was employed to determine whether the high rates of accuracy recorded with the adult participants in Study 1 was a function of cueing. The results from this study similarly indicated that this was not the case. The findings from the 3 studies lend support to the Relational Frame approach to the development of perspective-taking as generalized operant behavior.