# Citation Analysis of Relational Frame Theory: 2009-2016

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## Background

Relational Frame Theory (RFT) is a contemporary contextual behavioral account of human language and cognition. In 2010, Dymond, May, Munnelly, and Hoon elucidated the evidence base for RFT and the extent to which it had been disseminated in the broader scientific literature by conducting an analysis of articles published between 1991 and 2008 that cited RFT-related search terms. They found a total of 174 eligible articles, 42 of which were categorized as Empirical RFT. The aforementioned analysis was published when RFT was 25 years old – nine years after the publication of the seminal RFT text (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Roche, 2001). Has the dissemination of RFT continued and has there been an increase in the amount of empirical research conducted?

## Method

### Eligibility Criteria

Articles published in English language peer-reviewed journals between 2009 and 2016 citing relational frame theory, relational frames, arbitrarily applicable relational responding, derived stimulus relations, arbitrarily applicable relations or derived relational responding.

### Search Strategy

Articles were identified by searching electronic bibliographic databases including PsycINFO, Scopus and Web of Science using the aforementioned search terms.

### Article Categories

Two reviewers independently categorized the included articles as either Empirical or Non-Empirical. Non-Empirical articles were subcategorized as Conceptual or Review. Empirical articles were subcategorized as RFT or Other. Empirical RFT articles were further analyzed to identify types of relations studied and countries of origin.

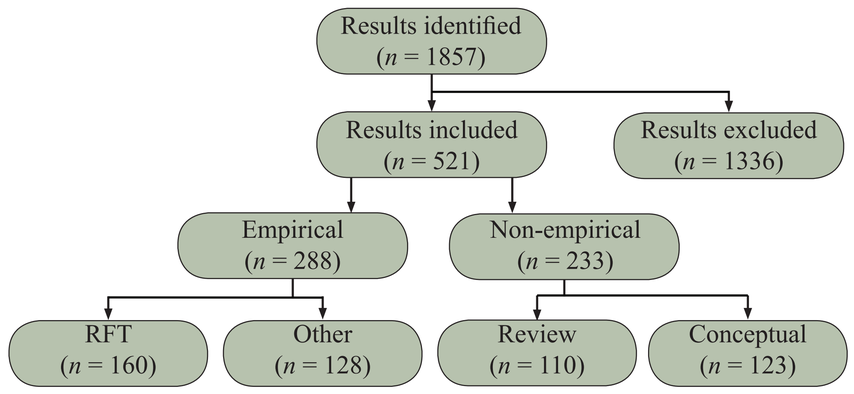


*Figure 1.* Flow diagram of the citation analysis.

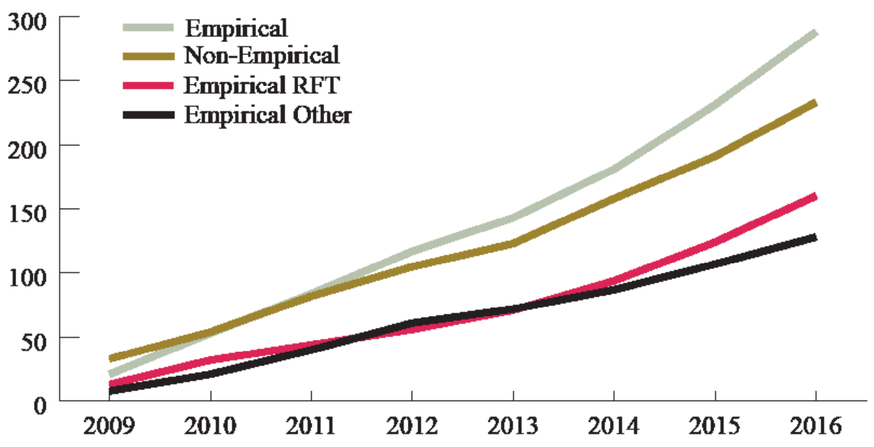


*Figure 2.* Cumulative number of articles citing RFT-related search terms.

## Results

Five hundred and twenty-one articles were included in the citation analysis (see Figure 1). Of these, 288 were categorized as Empirical (RFT = 160, Other = 128) and 233 were Non-Empirical (Conceptual = 123, Review = 110). Moreover, there has been a steady increase in the cumulative number of articles that cite one or more of the search terms (see Figure 2). The relational frames studied in the Empirical RFT articles are presented in Figure 3. The most studied relational frame was coordination ($n = 83$) followed by opposition ($n = 33$) and comparison ($n = 26$). Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4, Empirical RFT research has been conducted across five continents.

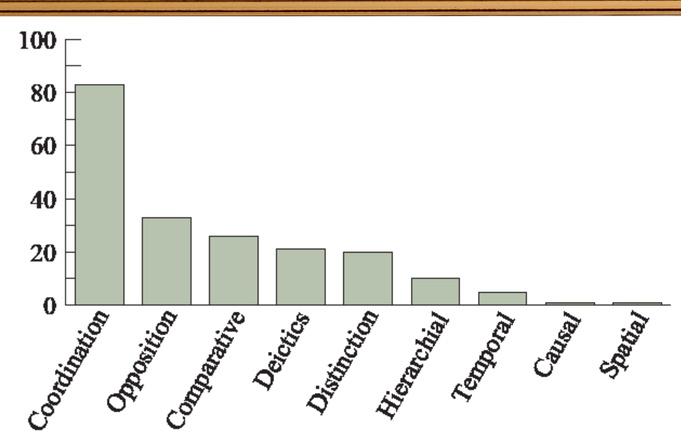


*Figure 3.* Relational frames studied in Empirical RFT articles.

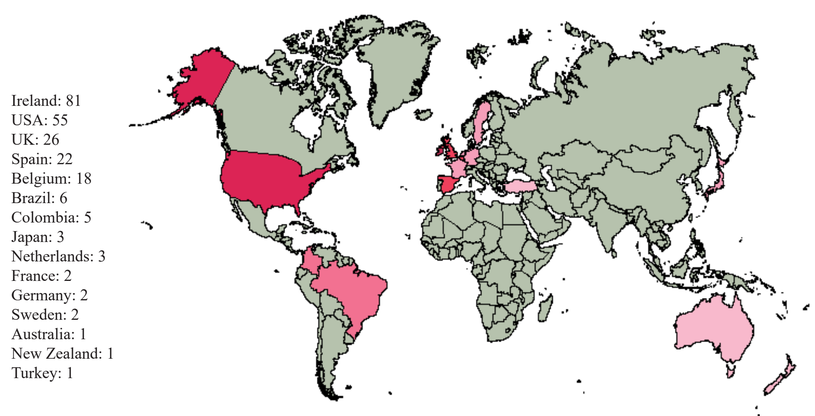


*Figure 4.* Number of Empirical RFT articles by country of origin.

## Discussion

### Limitations

The inclusion criteria for this citation analysis required that eligible articles be published in the English language. Consequently, a number of articles in other languages were excluded.

### Future Directions

Future research should systematically review the conceptual and applied developments in the RFT literature elucidated by this citation analysis. This extension of the current study would further clarify areas of RFT research emphasis and paucity.

### Conclusions

The current findings provide evidence of substantial growth in both citations of RFT and in Empirical RFT research, in terms of the number of studies and relation types.

### Full-text Article

Scan this QR code with your smart-phone to access the full-text article published in the *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*. Link:www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212144717300339

### References

Dymond, S., May, R. J., Munnelly, A., & Hoon, A. E. (2010). Evaluating the evidence base for relational frame theory: A citation analysis. *The Behavior Analyst, 33*, 97-117.

Hayes, S. C., Barnes-Holmes, D., & Roche, B. (Eds.). (2001). *Relational Frame Theory: A Post-Skinnerian account of human language and cognition*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.