

Investigating the Structure of Emotion Concepts: Evidence from Property Generation

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Abstract

Although work on conceptual knowledge has recently begun addressing the nature of abstract semantic representations, relatively little remains known about the structure of our knowledge of emotion concepts, an important subset of abstract concepts. Property generation, a common paradigm used to elaborate the featural representations of concepts that are components of many models of semantic memory, has been used extensively with concrete nouns, but in a limited number of studies investigating abstract concepts. No prior work, to our knowledge, has systematically investigated the process of property generation specifically for emotion concepts. In the present study, participants performed a property generation task in which they listed features of emotion concepts and a matching number of concrete and abstract, non-emotion concepts. Our results are interpreted with an emphasis on the distinction between emotion concepts and other abstract concepts, which differ in the distribution of features generated.