Generating a spectrum of kind representations

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Lexically expressible concepts such as DOG provide a perspective for thinking and talking about an abstract kind which is never encountered but is understood to contain an unlimited number of instances, as well as a perspective for thinking of the particular entities we encounter as one of an unlimited number instances of the same kind. Those instances are understood to be numerically distinct and need not differ qualitatively, except accidentally. The kind, on the other hand, cannot be understood to differ from other kinds merely numercially and accidentally. Kinds are distinguished from one another by their intrinsic character which is specified by the properties they are understood to have by virtue of being the kinds of things they are. Those properties have an explanatory, normative, and statistical connection to the kind (e.g. Dogs bark *because* they are dogs; Dogs are *supposed to* bark; Dogs, *in general*, bark) (Prasada, 2016; Haward, Carey & Prasada, 2021). This fragment of the perspectives provided by a concept like DOG receives no account in standard theories of conceptual representation.

I sketch a fragment of the theory of conceptual form according to which the perspectives provided by concepts are encoded in their formal structure which provides instructions for interpretation (Prasada, in preparation). According to the theory, kind representations are generative mechanisms that can generate an unlimted number of instance-of-kind representations that are expected to have the character that characterizes and distinguishes the kind from other kinds. Furthermore, the theory formally distinguishes different classes of kinds by whether they individuate both instances and subkinds, whether they individuate instances in more than one way, and whether they individuate other (non-subkind) kinds. This variety of classes of kind representations is generated via different combinations of the formal elements that are intrinsic to the kind repesentations that are in the class that contains DOG. The theory also allows for *ad hoc* instances, subkinds, and kinds, all of which are generated via conceptual combination. I will show how all these formal distinctions are linguistically relevant and help explain certain forms of systematic polysemy, count-mass phenomena, interpretation of generics, and constraints on the linguistic expression of generics among other differences in how we think and talk about kinds and their instances. Experimental and linguistic evidence for key components of the theory will also be presented.

References: • Prasada, S. (2016). Mechanisms for thinking about kinds, instances of kinds and kinds of kinds, In Barner, D.; and Baron, A. S., (eds) *Core Knowledge and Conceptual Change*. Oxford: OUP, 209-224. • Haward, P., Carey, S., & Prasada, S. (2021). The formal structure of kind representations. *Cognitive Science, 45*(10), Article e13040. • Prasada, S. (in preparation). *Conceptual form: The hidden structure of common sense concepts*, MIT Press.