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The Home-Concept: A Descriptive Analysis of Schemas for the Home

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The Home-Concept: A Descriptive Analysis of Schemas for the Home

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Background Literature:

The home has a great deal of psychological significance, typically viewed as “the prototypical place” (Lewicka, 2010a, p. 211). Homes help fulfill many needs in the lives of their occupants, including self-expression (Gosling et al., 2002), feelings of safety and control (Smith, 1994), among others. Even so, psychological research on the topic of home is relatively minimal (Graham et al., 2015; Meagher, 2020).

The current study investigates what types of associations (i.e., schemas) people commonly have for their home, and whether these vary across demographic groups.

Method:

We collected data from 204 participants from around the U.S. through the online platform *Prolific*. Participants completed an adapted version of the Twenty-Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), in which they completed the statement “My Home is...” twenty times.

Responses were categorized by a team of three researchers using the following codes: (1) Location (e.g., next to a park), (2) Activity (e.g., where I sleep), (3) Possessive (e.g., mine), (4) Financial (e.g., expensive), (5) Occupant (e.g., where my dog lives), (6) Objective Physical Descriptor (OPD) (e.g., brick), (7) Subjective Physical Descriptor (SPD) (e.g., dark), (8) Evaluative (e.g., good), and (8) Abstract Descriptor (AD) (e.g., safe).

Results and Discussion:

AD were the most common type of schema, followed by SPD and OPD. The most commonly used terms in each of these categories are shown in the figures to the right.

The only tested demographic variable that impacted the frequency of these category terms was age. Age was a negative predictor of AD frequency, $\beta = -0.192$, $t(193) = 7.90$, $p = .009$, and SPD frequency, $\beta = -0.145$, $t(193) = 8.43$, $p = .05$, but a positive predictor of OPD frequency, $\beta = 0.216$, $t(193) = 1.35$, $p = .003$.

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