

God sides with us: Reconstructing domain boundaries of causal concepts in Tonga

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Abstract: Research in cognitive and developmental psychology scrutinizes causal concepts predominantly from a domain-specific perspective. In particular, natural and supernatural concepts are frequently subordinated to incompatible and mutually exclusive domains. The profound ethnographic knowledge of cultural anthropology and recent psychological work suggest, however, that causal concepts can easily incorporate both of these and other domains. Previous results from Tonga also hint at the use of cross-domain explanations. To reconstruct boundaries of cognitive domains in Tonga, we collected pile-sorting data on how causal entities from different content areas are sorted into groups. Based on clusteranalysis and multidimensional scaling, distinct groups of items emerged that partially correspond to prevailing domain-specific classifications. In addition, we found data patterns that also indicate culture-specific representations of knowledge and an overlap of domains.