Quantity from a stative point of view

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The idea that quantity is a core category of cognition has been with us as early as Aristotle (and revitalized by Kant), and in more recent research this notion has been formalized and refined, particularly in areas studying nominals and events, to explain patterns of count/mass interpretation, telicity, and their interaction (Borer, 2005; Kiparsky, 1998; Krifka, 1989, 1992, 1998; Verkuyl, 1993). In this talk, I consider quantity from a stative point of view. I begin with observations of variable behavior in the availability of an existential interpretation of a subject of transitive stative predicates arising from the objects of stative verbs (Fernald, 1994, 2000), suggesting that quantity is active in states and drawing parallels between event and state interpretation (Husband, 2012). These observations are then extended to the availability of an existential interpretation of a subject of adjectival predicates, which appears to be related to the adjective's scale structure (Kennedy and McNally, 2005). I propose that quantity underlies scalar interpretations, relating the availability of existential interpretation again to quantity representations of states. These proposals have consequences for a theory of existential interpretation in which the quantity of a state’s temporal structure as quantized or homogeneous relates to the possibility of temporal modification (Percus, 1997) and the triggering of lifetime effects for subjects (Musan, 1997).