

Scott Grimm (University of Rochester) and **Beth Levin** (Stanford University)

Artifacts: Reference, Countability, and Categorization

Nouns like 'furniture' and 'mail' have long posed a puzzle for analyses of the mass/count distinction. They are non-countable like the core substance mass nouns (e.g., 'clay', 'water'); however, their denotations apparently include individual objects and are often taken simply to be composed of them. We argue, in part based on experimental evidence, for a more complex analysis of these nouns: they describe artifacts, which have a function or "associated event", and this must be taken account in their meaning. Crucially, the associated event for a 'furniture' noun typically requires multiple and often heterogeneous participants (e.g., furnishing a room usually requires several distinct pieces of furniture). Concomitantly, 'furniture' nouns normally refer to multiple objects; the non-countability facts follow from this property. We provide an analysis which builds the meanings for these nouns on the associated event. We also discuss some implications of this analysis for nominal lexical semantics.