

COST Action: CA17132

STSM Request reference number: ECOST-STSM-Request-CA17132-fc6fd26b

STSM title: Moral predicates in argumentation

STSM grantee name: Dr Isidora Stojanovic

Home institution: Institut Jean-Nicod, Paris, FR

Host institution: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, ES

STSM start and end date: 2022-09-01 - 2022-09-30

#### Research Interest

Isidora Stojanovic is a senior researcher at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (France) and a member of WG2: Norms of Public Argument: Concepts and Methods. She works at the interface of philosophy and linguistics. Her current research focuses on value judgments and evaluative discourse and language. The project carried out in the STSM will contribute to one of WG2's core aims: that of understanding, analyzing and evaluating argumentation in public policy contexts.

#### STSM Description

The project carried out in this STSM in collaboration with the host group, the Formal Linguistics Group (GLiF) at UPF, was a sequel to the project "Normative and evaluative constructions in argumentation: theoretical and empirical perspectives", carried out in early 2021, the results of which gave rise to two publications:

- Soria Ruiz, A., Maldonato, M. and Stojanovic, I. (2022) 'Good' and 'Ought' in Argumentation: COVID-19 as a Case Study. In Oswald, S. et al. (Eds.) *The Pandemic of Argumentation*. Springer. pp. 43-64;
- Stojanovic, I. and McNally, Are Moral Predicates Subjective? A Corpus Study. In Bordonaba, D. (Ed.) *Experimental Philosophy of Language: Perspectives, Methods and Prospects*, Springer (in press).

The present project's main aim has been to contribute to our understanding of moral language and, more particularly, to explore how moral language is used in argumentation. We undertook further analyses in order to address two intertwined research questions: (1) how do speakers signal whether they assess a moral issue relative to subjective vs. objective (that is, generally accepted) moral standards? (2) how do interlocutors indicate acceptance/rejection of the moral standards endorsed by the speaker?

Our research combined theoretical philosophy with corpus linguistics and formal semantics, thereby implementing APPLY's policy that theoretical discussion should be preferably driven by empirical data. We undertook a closer qualitative analysis of the previously collected corpus data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English COCA (Davies 2008). We sought to develop our initial observation that moral predicates occur both with subjective verb 'find' and the subjective verb 'consider', and we investigated the different factors that drive the speaker's preference for one verb over the other. We also set out to broaden and refine the corpus searches that we had initially conducted, with the aim of investigating how the subjective aspects of moral predicates interact with the speaker's conversational, and in particular, argumentative moves. The STSM made it possible to the grantee to gather research material for a paper, currently in preparation.