



# ACU

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

## School of Philosophy Seminar Series 2021

# Multidimensional Adjectives, Aggregation, and Social Choice

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**Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup> 12-1:30 PM (AEDT: VIC/NSW/ACT)/  
11-12:30 PM (AEST: QLD) over Zoom**

### **ABSTRACT**

Multidimensional adjectives are ubiquitous in natural language. An adjective  $F$  is multidimensional just in case whether  $F$  applies to an object  $x$ , or pair of objects  $x$  and  $y$ , depends on how  $x$  and  $y$  stand with respect to a set of underlying dimensions of  $F$ -ness. Developing a semantics for multidimensional adjectives requires us to solve *the aggregation problem*: how do the application conditions of an adjective  $F$  in its positive and comparative forms depend on its underlying dimensions? Here we develop a semantics for multidimensional adjectives that incorporates aggregation functions, and we develop a choice-theoretic framework for addressing the aggregation problem using such functions. We show that a range of results from social choice theory constrain the number and kind of dimensional aggregation functions admissible in a context, and we suggest that the cardinality of the set of such admissible functions will standardly be greater than 2. We then show that this view has a range of welcome consequences for questions concerning the determinacy and completeness of multidimensional comparatives. (*joint work with Brian Hedden*)



**Justin D'Ambrosio is Research Fellow at ANU.** Justin grew up mostly in Chicago, was an undergraduate at Northwestern University, and received his PhD from Yale in 2017. At ACU he is working with Daniel Stoljar, and he will take up a position at the University of St. Andrews in June. He works on a range of issues in the philosophy of language and mind, including the semantics of our perceptual and phenomenal vocabulary, the metaphysics of intentional mental states, and questions concerning the foundations of semantics. More recently he's been thinking about the nature of strategic and manipulative speech, propaganda, ideology, and a cluster of issues surrounding communication and trust in public discourse. He likes dogs, ice hockey, thrash metal, classical music and cooking.

*To register for the Zoom event or for other questions, please email [margot.strohminger@acu.edu.au](mailto:margot.strohminger@acu.edu.au).*