

Workshop: Empirical Data and Philosophical Theorizing (EDPT)
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Contrasting Cases

Abstract: This talk concerns the philosophical significance of a seemingly minor question about the design of context shifting experiments used by contextualists and anti-intellectualists: Should contexts be considered *jointly*, with contrast, or *separately*, without contrast? Findings in experimental psychology suggest (1) that certain contextual features are more difficult to evaluate when considered separately, and there are reasons to think that contextual features that interest contextualists and anti-intellectualists are such difficult to evaluate attributes, and (2) that joint evaluation of contexts can yield judgments that are more reflective and rational in certain respects. With those two points in mind, a question is raised about what source of evidence provides better support for philosophical theories of how contextual features affect knowledge ascriptions and evidence: Should we prefer evidence consisting of “ordinary” judgments, or more reflective, perhaps more rational judgments? That question is answered in relation to different accounts of what such theories aim to explain, and it is concluded that evidence from contexts evaluated jointly should be of central importance to contextualist and anti-intellectualist theories.