PRAGMATIC CONTEXTUALISM

GEOFF PYNN

Abstract: Contextualism in epistemology has traditionally been understood as the view that "know" functions semantically like an indexical term, encoding different contents in contexts with different epistemic standards. But the indexical hypothesis about "know" faces a range of objections. This article explores an alternative version of contextualism on which "know" is a semantically stable term, and the truth-conditional variability in knowledge claims is a matter of pragmatic enrichment. The central idea is that in contexts with stringent epistemic standards, knowledge claims are *narrowed*: "know" is used in such contexts to make assertions about particularly demanding types of knowledge. The resulting picture captures all of the intuitive data that motivate contextualism while sidestepping the controversial linguistic thesis at its heart. After developing the view, the article shows in detail how it avoids one influential linguistic objection to traditional contextualism concerning indirect speech reports, and then answers an objection concerning the unavailability of certain types of clarification speeches.

Keywords: contextualism, invariantism, knowledge attributions, pragmatic enrichment.

1. Introduction

Contextualists say that the truth conditions of a knowledge claim vary with the epistemic standard of the context in which the claim is made. Contextualism has traditionally been understood as a view about the semantic contents of sentences containing the verb "to know"; in particular, as the proposal that the verb "to know" functions semantically like an indexical term, encoding different contents in contexts with different epistemic standards. But the claim that "know" is semantically context sensitive faces a number of serious objections. Nonetheless, contextualism remains an appealing view, in large part because we have strong evidence that the intuitive truth conditions of knowledge claims vary from context to context. We can retain contextualism's appeal by treating it not as a thesis about the semantic profile of the word "know" but rather as a thesis about the contents asserted by speakers who make knowledge claims. In this article, I develop a version of *pragmatic contextualism*. The pragmatic contextualist regards "know" as a semantically invariant term but says that, due to processes of pragmatic enrichment, the truth conditions of knowledge claims vary with the epistemic standards of the context of utterance.

The specific version of pragmatic contextualism developed here accounts for the truth-conditional flexibility of knowledge claims in terms of lexical narrowing, a common variety of pragmatic enrichment. The proposal is that the word "know" denotes a relatively undemanding epistemic relation that we stand in with regard to many ordinary matters of fact, but that in contexts with inflated epistemic standards, speakers who make knowledge claims assert narrowed contents concerning unusually demanding types of knowledge. Unlike traditional contextualism, the proposal is compatible with austere conceptions of the nature and extent of semantic context sensitivity. It also reflects an unqualified endorsement of the Moorean perspective on which we know much of what we ordinarily take ourselves to know, and not merely, as the traditional contextualist has it, that our ordinary claims to know are often true. Yet the proposal also implies that the truth conditions of knowledge claims are more stringent in contexts where more serious practical concerns are pressing or unusual skeptical scenarios are taken seriously. So unlike traditional invariantism, the proposal is as charitable toward the intuitive data that motivate contextualism as is the indexical hypothesis about "know." The proposal also underwrites the same approach to skepticism that has made contextualism such an attractive idea to many epistemologists. Given these advantages over the traditional positions in the debate about the truth conditions of knowledge claims, pragmatic contextualism deserves serious consideration.

2. Varieties of Contextualism

The best evidence for contextualism comes from pairs of imagined conversations. Suppose that Low and High occur simultaneously, and that S and P have the same contents with respect to both contexts of utterance:

> *Low.* A speaker utters an instance of "S knows that P," thereby making an assertion that is intuitively true. The epistemic standard in the conversation is, in some sense, relaxed; no unusual error possibilities are salient, and the practical stakes connected with P are low.

> *High.* A speaker utters an instance of "S doesn't know that P," thereby making an assertion that is intuitively true. The epistemic standard in the conversation is, in some sense, strict; unusual error possibilities are salient or the practical stakes connected with P are high (or both).[1]

---

[1] Well-known examples of Low-High pairs include DeRose 1992's Bank Cases, Cohen 1999's Airport Cases, and DeRose 2009's Thelma and Louise Cases.

Contextualism predicts and explains the existence of Low-High pairs. Views on which the truth conditions of knowledge claims are fixed across contexts don't; at any rate, they don't do so in such a straightforward and charitable way. So Low-High pairs give us good reason to prefer contextualism over its denial.[2]

Low-High pairs suggest that the truth conditions of *assertions concerning knowledge* vary with the epistemic standards in the context of utterance. Contextualism has traditionally been understood as a thesis about *sentences containing the word "know" and its cognates*: in particular, that the content encoded by "know" varies with the epistemic standard of the context, with the result that the propositions encoded by knowledge sentences vary with context. Following MacFarlane (2009b), I will call this traditional view *indexical contextualism*:

> *Indexical Contextualism* (IC). The semantic content of an instance of the sentence "S knows that P" varies with the epistemic standard of the context of utterance.

If the semantic content of sentence *s* varies with context, then the truth conditions of assertions made by uttering *s* will vary with context as well. So IC provides a prima facie plausible explanation for the data revealed in Low-High pairs.[3]

But there is an array of influential objections to IC. Together the objections suggest that it is not especially plausible to regard "know" as an indexical term, even if doing so explains the data from Low-High pairs. Schiffer (1996) argues that IC imputes a problematic form of linguistic ignorance to ordinary speakers, who appear unaware that "know" is indexical (Hofweber [1999], Hawthorne [2004], and Stanley [2005] make similar points). And Cappelen and Lepore (2005), Hawthorne (2004), Stanley (2004 and 2005), and others have developed a variety of detailed and collectively troubling "linguistic" objections to IC, arguing that aside

---

[2] The actual dialectical situation is more complex than this brief description suggests. See Rysiew 2011 and Pynn forthcoming for more detailed overviews of the debate. For the purposes of this article I ignore "relativist" accounts of the semantics of knowledge claims, such as that defended with great skill by MacFarlane (2009a and 2014, chap. 8).

[3] Prominent contextualists have explained their views in ways that suggest a commitment to IC. Cohen, for example, says that he "construes 'knowledge' as an indexical" (Cohen 1988, 97), while DeRose characterizes contextualism as the view that "the truth-conditions of knowledge-ascribing and knowledge-denying sentences . . . vary in certain ways according to the context in which they are uttered'" (DeRose 2009, 2); DeRose (2009, 3) also gives an informal explanation of the contextualist thesis in terms of Kaplan's distinction between character and content. However, elsewhere Cohen and DeRose describe contextualism as a view about what speakers claim or say (see, e.g., Cohen 1999, 59, and DeRose 2009, 3). The ease with which they move back and forth between the claim about sentences and the claim about assertions suggests that Cohen and DeRose aren't distinguishing sharply between IC and the version of contextualism developed here.

from what we see in Low-High pairs the linguistic behavior of "know" is not as we would expect if it functioned semantically like an indexical. Given these objections, contextualists have an incentive to consider alternatives to IC.

Kompa (2002), Brogaard (2008), and MacFarlane (2009b) propose what MacFarlane calls *nonindexical contextualism* (NC). According to NC, the semantic content of "know" is stable across contexts, but circumstances of evaluation include a parameter that varies with epistemic standards. The semantic content of the sentence "Barack Obama was born in Hawaii" is (let's suppose) stable across contexts of utterance. Nonetheless, the truth-value of that content varies with the world (and perhaps the time) of evaluation. Analogously, according to NC, though knowledge sentences have invariant semantic contents, the truth-values of those contents may vary with the epistemic standard of the context of utterance. NC explains the sensitivity of the truth conditions of knowledge claims to epistemic standards while regarding "know" as semantically stable. So NC can sidestep objections targeted explicitly at IC. But this advantage comes at a price, which is the proposal that a particular content may be true with respect to one epistemic standard but false with respect to another. This is one of the main prices of relativism about knowledge claims as well, and contextualists may be reluctant to pay it.[4]

A different type of contextualism emerges when we highlight the distinction between sentence contents and asserted contents. Assertions are not sentences; they are speech acts accomplished by uttering sentences. What a speaker asserts by uttering a sentence may be distinct from the content encoded by the sentence she utters, even once we have assigned contents to any indexical elements in the sentence. Consider Bach 1994's example of a mother who, comforting her child who's received a nasty scrape, says, "You're not going to die." It's plausible that the content encoded by the sentence she's uttered is true only if her son is immortal; that is, only if he's not going to die, period. But this obvious falsehood isn't what she's asserted. She hasn't lied, nor does she have a delusional belief about her son's mortality. It is implausible to think that she commits herself to the claim that her son is immortal by her utterance. Rather, she has asserted that he is not going to die *from this scrape*, which is almost certainly true.

When a speaker asserts something other than the content encoded by the sentence she has uttered, her assertion is *pragmatically enriched*.[5]

---

[4] Stanley 2005, chap. 7, gives a number of objections to the proposal to add "nonstandard" parameters—like an epistemic standard parameter—to the circumstance of evaluation. MacFarlane 2009b responds to Stanley's objections (and some others). See also Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009, 20–24, for more general critical remarks about nonindexical contextualism.

[5] The term "pragmatic enrichment" is used in a wide variety of ways, often to signify more specific phenomena, and sometimes to refer to more general phenomena. Recanati 2012 gives a helpful overview.

Pragmatic contextualism holds that, in some range of contexts, knowledge claims are pragmatically enriched:

> *Pragmatic Contextualism* (PC). Due to processes of pragmatic enrich-ment, the contents asserted by utterances of knowledge sentences can vary with the epistemic standard of the context of utterance.

PC underwrites a straightforward explanation for the flexibility of the truth conditions of knowledge claims that is compatible with the falsity of IC. If the content asserted by a knowledge attribution made in a Low context is not the negation of the content asserted by a denial made in a High context, the assertions may be consistent, even if the contents of the uttered sentences are inconsistent. PC promises a way to sidestep the linguistic objections to IC without endorsing NC's proposal that propo-sitional truth varies with epistemic standards.

Stainton 2010 discusses PC in detail, exploring the idea that the truth-conditional variability in knowledge claims may result from "pragmatic determinants of what is asserted."[6] One can find PC-friendly ideas else-where in the contextualism literature, though their proponents have not always spoken in terms of pragmatic enrichment and have generally eschewed the "contextualist" label. For example, Rysiew (2001 and 2007) argues against IC by appeal to claims that pragmatic contextualists should find appealing. He says that the speakers in Low and High both "say something true," though not because of what is "*semantically encoded* or *expressed* by the *sentence itself*" but rather because of the "*conceptually and pragmatically enriched* proposition[s]" conveyed by their utterances (Rysiew 2001, 486, emphasis in original). Cappelen 2005 argues that while instances of "S knows that P" encode an invariant content that is typi-cally false (Cappelen is in this sense a "skeptic"), speakers may utter knowledge-attributing sentences to assert distinct truths. Rysiew and Cappelen both call themselves invariantists, but it is clear that what they intend to deny is that "know" is a semantically context-sensitive term, and not that the contents asserted by knowledge claims can vary with the context of utterance. Harman (2007, 175) advocates thinking of contextualism "not directly [as] a claim about the meanings of words or sentences" but rather about "*speaker meaning* or *utterer's meaning*." And Montminy (2007) considers several versions of what he calls *nondenomi-national contextualism*: that what is asserted by a speaker who utters "S

---

[6] More precisely, Stainton defends what he calls "speech-act contextualism," an umbrella view that includes both IC and PC, on which "assertions made using 'know' have different truth conditions, depending on the context of utterance" (Stainton 2010, 121). To avoid confusion—"speech-act contextualism" has also been used in Turri 2010 for a wholly dif-ferent kind of proposal—I don't follow Stainton in using that label. But it should be clear that the view developed here is greatly indebted to Stainton's paper.

knows that P" is that S knows that P according to standards E, where the value of E varies with context. At least one version of nondenominational contextualism (the one Montminy calls the Unarticulated Constituent Account) should be counted as a version of pragmatic contextualism.

Given the traditional identification of contextualism with IC, some may resist applying the "contextualist" label to PC. Combating that resistance isn't an interesting project; "contextualism" is, after all, a term of art. PC says that the truth conditions of knowledge claims vary with the epistemic standards of the context of utterance, thus agreeing with the contextualist (and disagreeing with contextualism's traditional opponents) about how to understand Low-High pairs: PC says that we should take the intuitive truth-values of the claims in both Low and High at face value. Moreover, Stainton (2010) argues that his view—which is clearly a version of PC—has all of the advantages traditionally claimed by contextualists. It underwrites a treatment of skepticism on which both ordinary claims to know and the corresponding knowledge denials made in skeptic-friendly contexts are true; it is compatible with plausible "closure" principles for knowledge; and it accounts for the role of the speaker's concerns in fixing the truth conditions of a knowledge claim. All of this can be had, Stainton thinks, without the burden of defending the controversial claim that "know" is semantically context sensitive. If such a view is not, strictly speaking, a version of contextualism, it is clearly a member of contextualism's extended family.

Though, as we shall see, PC treats (at least) one of the sentences uttered in a Low-High pair as untrue, it should not be confused with a proposal on which either speaker in a Low-High pair *asserts* falsely or makes a false *claim*. Such a proposal would *not* be a member of the contextualist family. The chief intuitive motivation for contextualism is a desire to accommodate as far as possible our judgments about the truth and falsity of ordinary first-order knowledge claims. Compare PC to a different, more familiar "pragmatic" account of the intuitions in Low-High pairs: the proposal that while the speaker in one of the cases falsely attributes or denies knowledge to the subject, she is, given various conversational norms or other factors, nonetheless somehow warranted in doing so. Such a proposal involves what DeRose calls a *warranted assertability maneuver*, or WAM; those who offer WAMs to account for the propriety of false knowledge claims are known in the literature as WAMmers. A WAMmer may say, for example, that while High-context knowledge denials are false, given the high epistemic standards in place, such false knowledge denials are informative and conversationally appropriate.

One way to develop the WAM proposal is to lean on Grice's (1989) concept of *conversational implicature*. Perhaps by falsely denying that the subject knows in High, the speaker implicates that the subject is not in an epistemic position strong enough for whatever purposes conversational

participants are concerned with; then her assertion, though false, may nonetheless be appropriate because it conveys relevant information.[7] PC, by contrast, starts with the idea that pragmatic enrichment affects "the literal truth-conditional content of speech acts" (Stainton 2010, 123). So PC does not involve any such WAM. It treats both the knowledge attribution in High and the knowledge denial in Low as simply true. There is no need to shoehorn the knowledge claim in either context into the category of false-but-informative speech.

In the rest of this article I explore and defend a version of PC. Along with the majority of contemporary epistemologists, the picture here presupposes that knowledge is not especially difficult to come by. Accordingly, the instances of "S knows that P" uttered in Low contexts typically encode truths, and when they do, the corresponding knowledge-denying sentences uttered by speakers in High contexts encode falsehoods. But High-context speakers do not assert the false contents encoded by the sentences they utter. High-context knowledge denials are understood as examples of *lexical narrowing*, where a semantically simple predicate is used to assert a content concerning a proper subset of the predicate's denotation. I develop this idea in sections 3 and 4. Then, in section 5, I discuss PC's relationship to some of the linguistic objections that target IC, showing in detail how moderate PC is immune to an influential objection concerning indirect speech reports. In section 6, I consider some observations from Fantl and McGrath (2009) and Abath (2012) that appear to make trouble for PC. Though their complaints do not quite hit the target, there is a problem for PC in the neighborhood. A certain clarification technique typically available for enriched (and, in particular, narrowed) assertions is unavailable to High-context knowledge deniers. I explain this difference by reference to the unique normative role played by knowledge attributions: given the tight link between knowledge claims and judgments about assertability, we should expect the relevant clarifications to be unavailable in High contexts.

The aim of the article is not to *establish* PC in general, let alone the particular version I develop. The discussion about contextualism is mature, and a full defense of any position in the debate is beyond the scope of a single article. Starting with the supposition that both claims in a Low-High pair are true, I trace a path through the theoretical landscape that avoids various pitfalls and has not been thoroughly explored before. The view arrived at is attractive and plausible, deserving of serious consideration and further development and defense.

---

[7] Black 2005, Brown 2006, Hazlett 2007, Pritchard 2010, and Schaffer 2004 all give invariantist accounts in the WAM family. Davis 2007's proposal that Low-context knowledge attributions are false but appropriate examples of "loose talk" is a different kind of approach along these lines.

3. Moderate PC

There are several different ways one could elaborate PC. The first decision point concerns whether to treat the contents of knowledge sentences as *semantically complete*. As I use that phrase, a sentence is semantically complete when its content is truth evaluable with respect to a context of utterance. On this usage, sentences containing indexicals can be semantically complete. For example, the sentence "I am Barack Obama" encodes a truth with respect to a context where Obama is the speaker and a falsehood with respect to a context where Obama is not the speaker. By contrast some sentences appear to be semantically incomplete. For example, consider sentences containing "ready." The content encoded by "Obama is ready" seems to fall short of truth evaluability, even with respect to a particular context of utterance. Without an answer to the question "Ready for what?" that sentence's content can't be evaluated for truth or falsity, and there doesn't seem to be any indexical element in the sentence that encodes an answer. Instances of "S knows that P" don't appear to be like this. "Obama knows that he won the 2008 election" seems to encode a truth-evaluable content, and so to be semantically complete. The version of PC I'll develop takes this appearance at face value.[8]

Given that knowledge sentences are semantically complete, we can ask what it takes for their contents to be true. A *skeptical* theorist answers that the content of an instance of "S knows that P" is true only if the subject meets a very high epistemic standard with respect to P. Consequently the knowledge-denying sentence uttered in High is typically true, while the knowledge-attributing sentence uttered in Low is typically false. A skeptical proponent of PC thus holds that Low-context knowledge attributions are enriched. Cappelen (2005, 16), for example, says that "know" is invariant and that it is "extremely hard to know anything" but argues that speakers in Low contexts who utter instances of "S knows that P" typically assert that S knows that P *by low standards*. Assuming that this content may be true even while that encoded by "S knows that P" is false, Low-context speakers may assert truly despite uttering sentences whose contents are false.

One challenge for Cappelen's proposal about what's asserted in Low contexts is that this last assumption may be false. As Montminy (2007, 115–16) points out, it is not clear how a subject could fail to know

---

[8] The suggestion that knowledge sentences are semantically incomplete but used to express (enriched) complete propositions is certainly worth exploring. On such a view what's encoded by a knowledge sentence would be what Bach 1994 calls a *propositional radical* and Soames 2008 a *propositional skeleton*. Assuming that asserted contents are truth evaluable, any content asserted by an utterance of a sentence with a skeletal content would then be pragmatically enriched. For a theorist drawn to the idea that *most* sentences are semantically incomplete—an idea related to what Cappelen and Lepore (2005) call "radical contextualism"—such a version of PC should seem plausible indeed.

something while still knowing it by a low standard: that S knows that P by a low standard seems to imply that S knows that P. If it does imply this, then Cappelen's proposal is in trouble. But Montminy's point does not spell doom for skeptical PC; one can imagine other proposals about what contents are asserted by knowledge attributions on which the content asserted in Low does not imply that S knows that P (for example: that S is close enough to knowing P for current purposes). A different reason to worry about skeptical PC is that it ordinarily seems not only that we can truly attribute knowledge to ourselves concerning many mundane matters of fact but also that we in fact *know* many mundane matters of fact. Skeptical PC is thus at odds with our ordinary perspective. Moreover, the view that knowledge is extremely epistemically demanding is widely rejected by contemporary epistemologists.[9] If an alternative approach is open, it is preferable to one that involves commitment to thoroughgoing skepticism.

A *moderate* says that knowledge is not especially demanding; that is, that the relation denoted by "know" may obtain between many subjects and mundane matters of fact. On a moderate version of PC, the knowledge-attributing sentence uttered in Low typically encodes a truth, and hence the knowledge-denying sentence uttered in High typically encodes a falsehood but is used to assert a distinct truth. Moderate PC faces no challenge analogous to that which Montminy poses for the Cappelen-esque proposal, since there is no puzzle about how a subject could know, yet fail to know by an especially high standard. In addition, moderate PC aligns unequivocally with the Moorean perspective on which we know much of what we ordinarily take ourselves to know. For the proponent of moderate PC, even in High contexts we retain this knowledge. So moderate PC is robustly antiskeptical: it says that while a High-context knowledge denial is true, this is not because the relevant instance of "S doesn't know that P" is true with respect to that context, much less because S doesn't know that P. It is rather because High-context speakers assert enriched contents compatible with the falsity of the contents encoded by the sentences they utter.

If "S knows that P" is complete and invariant and ordinary subjects know many mundane matters of fact, then Low-context speakers needn't assert anything other than the contents of the sentences they utter in order to assert truly. Of course they may. The moderate theorist can allow that Low-context knowledge attributions are sometimes or even typically enriched. But she doesn't need to treat Low-context knowledge attributions as enriched in order to regard them as true. For the moderate

---

[9] For example, in the 2009 PhilPapers survey of professional philosophers, only 4.8 percent of professional philosophers (and 9.4 percent of epistemologists) identify "Skepticism" as their view about the external world, while 81.6 percent (and 84.4 percent of epistemologists) pick "Non-skeptical realism" (Bourget and Chalmers 2013).

theorist, the interesting action happens in High contexts. What truths do High-context speakers assert? And how should we understand the pragmatic mechanisms by which their assertions have the contents that they do?

There are many different kinds of knowledge. You saw John in his office yesterday. I spoke with him on the phone, and he told me that he was in his office. Thelma noticed his hat outside his office door, overheard several conversations whose participants presupposed that he was in, and is familiar with his weekly schedule. By the moderate's lights, each of us knows that John was in his office. But our knowledge is of different kinds. Yours is perceptual, Thelma's is inferential, mine is testimonial. Though coarse and vague—there are many different types of perceptual knowledge, and the boundary between these types of knowledge is hardly clear—such distinctions are consequential. Your overall epistemic position with respect to some fact varies with the type of knowledge you have of that fact. There are epistemic positions one can occupy only by having particular types of knowledge. For example, you are in an epistemic position to offer eyewitness testimony that P only if you have firsthand perceptual knowledge that P. You're in an epistemic position to give a sound proof of P only if you have a detailed inferential knowledge of P. That you do not have the right kind of perceptual knowledge or inferential knowledge need not imply that you do not have knowledge. You may know that P without having the type of knowledge of P needed to occupy a particular epistemic position with respect to P.

In a situation where a particular epistemic position (and hence a particular type of knowledge) is called for, subjects who do not have the relevant kind of knowledge do not have what is called for. The epistemic standard in a context is largely determined by the interests and concerns of conversational participants. So when you and your interlocutors are in a situation that requires knowledge of a certain type, the epistemic standard in your context will tend to be such that only those with knowledge of the relevant type meet it. If you don't have knowledge of that type, you won't meet the standard of your context. Nor will anyone else who doesn't have the relevant type of knowledge. For all that, you can still have knowledge of some other type. Moderate PC construes the subject of the High-context knowledge denial as someone who knows that P but doesn't have the type of knowledge of P he would need to meet the high epistemic standard of the context in which the denial is made.

Let $know_x$ denote knowledge of a type that puts the subject in a position to meet epistemic standard x. If S knows that P, then there is some x such that S knows$_x$ that P. Nonetheless S may know that P while failing to know$_y$ that P for some other standard y. Suppose that "S knows that P" does not encode any information about standards, types of knowledge, or ways of knowing; that is, that there is no particular standard s such that

"S knows that P" encodes the information that S knows$_s$ that P. Moderate PC can be stated as the proposal that:

    A. The subject of the High-context knowledge denial knows that P, and so the content encoded by "S does not know that P" as uttered in the High context is false.
    B. By uttering "S does not know that P" the High-context speaker asserts a pragmatically enriched content equivalent to (H), where h is the epistemic standard of High:

(H) S does not know$_h$ that P.

Provided that the subject of the High-context denial doesn't have knowledge of the type required by the situation of conversational participants, the relevant instance of (H) will be true with respect to the High context. So the High-context knowledge denial, though accomplished by uttering a sentence that encodes a false content, is true.[10]

4. "Knows" and Narrowing

Moderate PC suggests that High-context knowledge denials can be understood as instances of *lexical narrowing*. Narrowing is a common phenomenon (Carston 2002, chap. 5; Wilson 2003). Simple predicates are often used to convey more specific information than what is encoded by their lexical meanings. For example:

    (1) In this economy, Sharon is lucky to have work. (that is, paying work)
    (2) Everybody at the party drinks. (that is, drinks alcoholic beverages)
    (3) My son loves milk. (that is, cow's milk)

In many easily imaginable circumstances a speaker who uttered each sentence would convey the more specific ("narrower") content spelled out in parentheses. In these examples the narrowed content is logically stronger than what's encoded by the uttered sentence. But this is inessential to the

---

[10] This picture resembles that presented in section 5 of Rysiew 2001. Rysiew distinguishes not between sentence content and asserted content but between the "proposition literally expressed" by a sentence and the proposition "pragmatically imparted by utterances" of that sentence. For Rysiew, what's going on in a High context is that by "uttering a falsehood" the speaker "imparts" a truth. Despite this terminological difference, for reasons discussed in section 2 above, I think Rysiew should be treated as a friend to PC. DeRose (2009, 118–24) raises doubts about Rysiew's explanation for how listeners can be expected to cotton on to a distinct "pragmatic meaning" in contexts where that is what the maker of a knowledge claim intends to communicate by her utterance. The ideas developed in the next section are intended, in part, to answer DeRose's criticism of Rysiew.

phenomenon. Narrowing can also occur within the scope of negation, with the result that the narrowed content is logically weaker than the content encoded by the uttered sentence:

(4) John isn't working this week, so he promised to clean the basement. (that is, to work at his job)
(5) Most Jehovah's Witnesses don't drink. (that is, drink alcoholic beverages)
(6) My daughter can't have milk yet; she's still nursing. (that is, cow's milk)

Unlike the first set of examples, the contents encoded by sentences (4)–(6) seem false with respect to the envisioned contexts of utterance. Cleaning out the basement is work; all Jehovah's Witnesses drink, just not alcohol; since my daughter is nursing, she can have milk, just not cow's milk. By uttering a sentence that encodes a false content, the speaker would convey the logically weaker truth clarified in parentheses.

It's natural to think about narrowing in terms of pragmatic enrichment. In none of (1)–(6) does the relevant predicate seem to be indexical. The content encoded by "work" doesn't appear to vary with the type of work that is contextually salient, nor does the semantic content of "milk" vary with the type of milk salient in the context. The content encoded by the sentence "My daughter drinks milk" would be true if she drinks human milk, even with respect to a context where cow's milk is the salient type of milk. Moreover, it is plausible in each case to think that the speaker would *assert* the narrowed content rather than the broader content encoded by the uttered sentence, and not merely communicate the narrowed content in some indirect fashion. If someone at the party doesn't drink alcoholic beverages, you would assert falsely by uttering (2). Similarly, it would be bizarre to accuse a speaker who uttered (4) of having lied or made an error on the grounds that cleaning out the basement is a kind of work.

A related phenomenon is what Taylor (2007) calls *modificational neutrality*. A modificationally neutral term denotes a property without regard to that property's manner of instantiation. Taylor's example is "red." His idea is that "red" applies to anything that's red in any particular way: red dirt (which is red through and through), red apples (which are just red on the outside), red tables (red on top), red books (red front and back), and so on. Taylor says that "X is red" is true just in case X is red in some way.[11] Nonetheless speakers who utter "X is red" or "X is not red" often thereby convey more specific information about the way in which X is or is not red; particular uses of "red" are often narrowed. When a particular way of

---

[11] Taylor's idea is not that "X is red" *means* that X is red in some way or another. "X is red" isn't supposed to encode any hidden quantificational structure. The idea is rather that "X is red" tells us nothing about the manner in which X is red.

being red is conversationally salient, a speaker who utters "X is red" or "X isn't red" will convey the narrowed content that X is or isn't red in the salient way. Suppose a melon with orange flesh has been spray painted red. In a context in which we are looking for spherical objects with red surfaces, we could point to it and say, "That's red," while in a context where we are sorting fruits by the color of their flesh, we could point to it and say, "That one's not red."

It's easy to find other examples of modificational neutrality. Consider "cut."[12] There are many ways of cutting: for example, the way you cut a cake (slicing vertically into pieces), the way you cut lawn (chopping horizontally), and the way a surgeon cuts skin (opening a seam in a surface). A given instance of "X cut Y" does not encode any information about the manner in which X cut Y, but a speaker who utters "X cut Y" often conveys a narrower content about the way in which X cut Y. For example, a speaker who utters "Sally cut the lawn" will typically convey that Sally cut the lawn in the manner in which normally one cuts lawn; that is, with a mower. And an utterance of "X didn't cut Y" is apt to convey that X didn't cut Y in the salient way, which does not imply that X did not cut Y. Suppose you asked your friend Sharon, an eccentric medical resident, to cut the birthday cake. She went to the kitchen and made a small incision with her scalpel around the cake's circumference. When you went to serve the cake, it would be appropriate to exclaim, "Sharon, you didn't cut the cake!" The propriety of the exclamation wouldn't be reduced if you found out what she'd done with her scalpel.

Modificationally neutral terms are typically used to convey narrowed contents. If lexical narrowing is a form of pragmatic enrichment, then, it is plausible to explain the manifest flexibility in our use of modificationally neutral terms in terms of pragmatic enrichment. Here is a skeletal pragmatic theory for "cut":

> *Pragmatic Contextualism About "cut"* (PCc). Due to processes of pragmatic enrichment, the contents asserted by utterances of "X cut Y" and "X did not cut Y" typically vary with the manner of cutting salient in the context of utterance; in particular, such utterances tend to constitute assertions that X cut / did not cut Y in the salient manner.

Given that "cut" denotes cutting without specifying any manner of cutting, an instance of "X cut Y" encodes a content that is true if X cut Y in any manner whatsoever. Let cut_c denote the manner of cutting salient in context C. PCc says that a speaker who utters "X cut Y" in C typically asserts that X cut_c Y, and similarly, that a speaker who utters "X did not

---

[12] See Searle 1980 and Recanati 2010, chap. 1, for discussion of this example. Searle presents three "difficulties" for the pragmatic account of "cut," but none is very convincing (see pp. 225–26). Recanati's view is, in essence, the same as the proposal given here.

cut Y" in C typically asserts that X did not cut$_c$ Y. A parallel skeletal theory can be provided for "red," as well as for other modificationally neutral terms. Moderate PC about "know" is clearly a member of this broader family of theories. The pragmatic treatment of narrowed uses of modficationally neutral terms provides a natural model for a moderate version of PC.[13]

So here is where we are. The contextualist aims to respect the intuitive truth of the claims made in Low-High pairs. IC and NC both face challenges, pointing us to PC as an alternative. Section 3 led us to a moderate version of PC. In this section, I've situated moderate PC within a broader theoretical framework and suggested that the type of enrichment it posits is an example of the common phenomenon of lexical narrowing. At each point along the way, there are reasons to favor the path that leads to the present proposal, and the fact that moderate PC enables us to treat High-context knowledge denials as instances of a more general phenomenon indicates that it is not ad hoc. In the next section I show how moderate PC is unaffected by an influential objection to IC.

5. Moderate PC and Indirect Reports

As I mentioned in section 2, a number of "linguistic" objections have been raised against IC. For example, Stanley argues that "know" is not gradable and so does not belong to the family of semantically context-sensitive terms, such as "tall," "flat," "happy," and so on, with which it is sometimes compared by contextualists (Stanley 2004 and 2005). Stanley recognizes that this is not a decisive objection to IC, since there are other varieties of semantic context sensitivity than that exhibited by gradable terms. Nonetheless, the argument puts pressure on the proponent of IC to find a different family of semantically context-sensitive terms with which to categorize "know."[14] But as Stainton notes, if the varying truth conditions of knowledge claims arise from pragmatic factors, then this objection is "a bit of a red herring," since one can make *claims* that are "subject to degrees" even when the terms one uses to make the claims aren't semantically gradable (Stainton 2010, 128).[15]

---

[13] Some theorists would explain the flexibility of "red" by saying that its lexical meaning involves hidden variables whose values are assigned in context (e.g., Szabó [2001]), while others argue that "red" is an indexical (e.g., Rothschild and Segal [2009]); analogous proposals could be made regarding "cut." See sections 4 and 5 of Rothschild and Segal 2009 for evidence against the hidden-variable view, and section 6 for some "conceptual" objections to the indexical view

[14] Halliday 2007 and Blome-Tillman 2008 both respond to the gradability objection on behalf of the contextualist.

[15] Stainton's examples are "She weighs 80 kg" and "John is a vegetarian." Stainton says that what's required for the truth of assertions made using these sentences varies in degree from context to context, even though "weighs 80 kg" and "is vegetarian" aren't gradable.

Another influential objection to IC concerns the behavior of "know" in indirect speech reports. We make an indirect speech report when we describe someone's utterance without using direct quotation. In a disquotational indirect speech report, we make an indirect speech report using the very same words that the speaker herself uttered. For example, "Julie said that Barack Obama is president" is a disquotational report of Julie's utterance of the sentence "Barack Obama is president."

When a speaker utters a sentence containing an indexical term, a disquotational speech report of her utterance is generally false with respect to contexts that differ from the context of the reported utterance in a way relevant to the content of the indexical. For example, in a context in which you are the speaker, "Julie said that I am hungry" is a false report of Julie's utterance of "I am hungry." Thus if "know" were an indexical term whose content varied with the epistemic standards of the context of utterance, then we'd expect utterances involving "know" to be unreportable using disquotation across contexts with different epistemic standards. But utterances involving "know" *do* appear to be reportable using disquotation across contexts with different epistemic standards. This fact provides evidence against IC.[16] I'll argue in this section that the disquotation data pose no analogous threat to moderate PC.

We can illustrate the objection using DeRose's Thelma and Louise Cases. Thelma, Louise, and Lena are co-workers. All three saw John's hat in the hall and overheard conversations whose participants presupposed that John was in, but none saw him in person. On the basis of this evidence each believes that John was in. After work Thelma is in a tavern settling a trivial bet about where John was today; the epistemic standard in the tavern is low. After claiming to know that John was in, she adds:

(7) Lena knows that John was in the office.

Later that night, the police are questioning Louise about John's location; the epistemic standard in the interrogation is high. She says:

(8) Lena doesn't know that John was in the office.

By the contextualist's lights, the assertions are consistent because the epistemic standard of Thelma's conversation is different from that of Louise's. Now, consider continuations of each scenario:

---

[16] A number of writers, including Cappelen and Lepore (2005, 88–96), Stanley (2005, 52–53), and MacFarlane (2009b, 239) offer versions of this objection to IC. Hawthorne (2004, 98–111) presents a closely related objection concerning indirect belief reports. See Blome-Tillman (2008, 32–41) and DeRose (2009, 161–74) for responses on behalf of contextualism.

High-Low Report. The police play Louise a recording of Thelma's conversation in the tavern. Then one says:

(9) Thelma said that Lena knows that John was in the office.

Low-High Report. Later on, one of Thelma's friends shows up and plays her a recording of Louise's interrogation by the police, and says:

(10) Louise said that Lena doesn't know that John was in the office.

Contrary to what we would expect if "know" functioned like an indexical in indirect speech reports, (9) and (10) seem true. In neither case would Louise or Thelma respond to her interlocutor by saying, "No, she didn't!" The cases provide evidence that "know" is not an indexical, and hence furnish evidence against IC.

To see why moderate PC is not threatened by this objection, we first need to consider how "said that" reports interact with pragmatic enrichment. Suppose that a speaker makes an enriched assertion: the content of *s* with respect to C is P, but by uttering *s* in C he asserts Q. Now consider another context C* with respect to which *s* also encodes P. Is the reporting sentence "S said that *s*" true or false with respect to C*? Here are two options:

Sentence Tracking Is Sufficient (STS). "S said that *s*" is true with respect to C* if (i) S uttered *s* in C and (ii) the content encoded by *s* with respect to C = the content encoded by *s* with respect to C*.

Assertion Tracking Is Necessary (ATN). "S said that *s*" is true with respect to C* only if the content encoded by *s* with respect to C* = the content asserted by S's utterance of *s* in C.

Given STS, the answer to the question is yes: provided the content encoded by *s* is the same in the reporting context as it was in the original context of utterance, the "said that" report is true. Given ATN, the answer to the question is no: in order for the "said that" report to be true, the content encoded by *s* in the reporting context must match the content asserted by S in the original context of utterance.

Though settling this issue is obviously not feasible here, STS appears more plausible than ATN. Recall the example from Bach of the mother who utters "You're not going to die," thereby asserting that her son is not going to die from his scrape. Now consider the following report made by her son in the doctor's office:

(11) Mother said that I'm not going to die.

STS implies that (11) is true, while ATN implies that (11) is false. And (11) seems true, not false.[17]

Given STS, PC implies that both (9) and (10) are true. Since "know" is semantically stable, the contents encoded by (7) and (8) with respect to their contexts of utterance are the same as the contents encoded by the disquoted elements of (9) and (10) with respect to their contexts of utterance. So given the more plausible understanding of how "said that" reports interact with pragmatic enrichment, the data from disquotational "said that" reports underwrite no objection to PC.

But suppose that ATN were true. Moderate PC would still be unthreatened by the intuitive truth of (9). By the lights of moderate PC, the truth asserted by Thelma's knowledge attribution is simply (7)'s content. And since (7)'s content is what is encoded by the disquoted element of (9), moderate PC can treat (9) as true even given ATN. However, given ATN, moderate PC would imply that (10) is false. The reason is that in making her knowledge denial, Lena does not assert (8)'s content but rather that Lena does not $know_h$ that John was in. Since this is not what is encoded by the disquoted element of (10), ATN means that (10) is false. Here, finally, we have the makings of an objection to moderate PC from disquotational reports. Since it seems that Low-context speakers can truly report High-context knowledge denials using disquotational "said that" reports, moderate PC would, given ATN, have some explaining to do.

Happily, an explanation is easy to come by. ATN implies that indirect reporting sentences are false without a match in asserted content. But such sentences can be used to *assert* true reports. This must be what Bach's son does by uttering (11): given ATN, the sentence is false but used to assert truly that the mother said that he was not going to die *from this scrape*. Likewise, Thelma's friend can assert a true report by uttering (10) even though (10) itself is false. Indeed, this is a plausible understanding of the case: once Louise's interrogation with the police is under discussion, the high epistemic standard of Louise's context becomes salient. Thus by uttering (10) Thelma's friend asserts a narrowed content; that is, that Louise said that Lena doesn't $know_h$ that John was in. So even given ATN, by appealing to pragmatic enrichment to understand the assertions made by utterances of such sentences, the proponent of moderate PC can explain why the report made in Low-High Report is true. There is no serious challenge to moderate PC from the data involving cross-contextual "said that" reports.

---

[17] Obviously it is compatible with STS that a match in asserted content is *also* sufficient for a true "said that" report. Indeed, this is plausible: "Mother said that I'm not going to die from this scrape" seems like it would be true as well.

6. A Clarification Problem?

Fantl and McGrath (2009, 47–48) make several critical points about Stainton's account. First, they suggest that some of the linguistic objections mustered by Stanley 2005 also indict Stainton's proposal. One is the objection just addressed involving indirect reports, and the other concerns "propositional anaphora." The concerns about propositional anaphora deserve a detailed discussion, which I cannot provide here. It is my hope that the strategy presented in section 5 for dealing with indirect reports can be made to work for the issues involving propositional anaphora as well, though the issues involved are subtle.

Second, Fantl and McGrath say that Stainton's proposal involves a "sort of chauvinism that contextualists have wanted, naturally, to avoid." They mention two types of chauvinism. The first they call "truth-value chauvinism," since it implies that one of the two sentences uttered in a Low-High pair encodes a false content. The second they call "chauvinism concerning who asserts semantic content"—that is, concerning whose assertion's content is encoded by the sentence that she utters. A version of PC on which "know" is semantically incomplete won't exhibit either type of chauvinism, so this is not an issue for PC per se. However, Fantl and McGrath's observation has some bite from the perspective of moderate PC. Here is a way of developing the point. IC, NC, and a version of PC on which knowledge sentences are incomplete are all, in an important way, neutral about the nature and extent of knowledge. They imply nothing about who knows what, and so are defensible independently of any particular epistemological standpoint. Moderate PC, by contrast, is defensible only from a moderate antiskeptical perspective; that is, one on which knowledge is easy to come by. Whether this is an advantage or a disadvantage will depend, of course, on how we feel about the moderate perspective itself. Since the majority of epistemologists agree that we know a good deal (see footnote 10), I expect that a majority of epistemologists would find this to be an appealing feature of moderate PC, rather than a cause for concern.

Third, Fantl and McGrath, discussing Stainton's proposal, say that "speakers do not seem to be able to distinguish clearly between what they are asserting and the semantic content of the knowledge-sentences they use" (2009, 48). There is a real problem lurking here for moderate PC, though getting from the observation to a cogent objection takes some work.

Suppose that in a gallery full of paintings of animals, the owner asserts (13) by uttering (12):

(12) There is a tiger in the next room.
(13) There is a painting of a tiger in the next room.

In this example, the distinction between sentence content and asserted content is crystal clear. Fantl and McGrath are right that the analogous distinction is not clear when it comes to High-context knowledge denials. A theorist looking for an uncontroversial example of pragmatic enrichment would not be wise to choose knowledge claims! However, it is not *generally* obvious to competent speakers whether they've asserted the content of the sentence they've uttered or an enriched content. Whether a particular element of an asserted content is encoded by the uttered sentence is often a difficult question about which experts disagree. Montminy (2009), for example, observes that there is theoretical controversy over whether quantifier domain restriction occurs at the level of sentence meaning or at the level of speaker meaning; that is, whether "All F's are G's" encodes a content involving a domain restriction or whether the domain restriction is pragmatically generated. However that controversy turns out, some theorists will have been wrong about the contents encoded by quantifier-involving sentences, and thus about the distinction (or identity) between sentence content and asserted content in very many mundane quantifier-involving claims. This situation illustrates that "it is simply not true that all thoughtful people should placidly agree" about what content is encoded by a particular sentence (Montminy 2009, 650).[18]

Abath agrees with Montminy's general observation but says there is a crucial difference between quantifiers and knowledge claims. In the former case, all speakers are "aware of the contents they convey, including domain restriction," whereas "when it comes to knowledge attributions, subjects are typically not aware of contents in which epistemic standards figure" (Abath 2012, 596). If High-context speakers were unaware of contents involving high epistemic standards, then (one might think) moderate PC would imply that there is a worrisome sense in which High-context speakers don't know what they are asserting. This would be a marked and troubling difference from the other cases of narrowing we've discussed, where speakers *do* seem to be aware of the narrowed contents they assert in making their utterances, even if it is not obvious to them that those narrowed contents are distinct from the contents encoded by the sentences they utter. And the plausibility of the claim that a speaker asserted a given enriched content largely depends upon the plausibility of attributing to her an intention to communicate that content. So Abath's observation could make real trouble for moderate PC.

But moderate PC does not say that speakers who make knowledge claims assert contents "in which epistemic standards figure"; rather, it says

---

[18] Note too that the "tiger" example involves a different kind of enrichment from the cases we've been considering. It's not narrowing but rather what Wilson 2003 calls "metaphorical extension." Paintings of dogs are not types of dogs.

that what a speaker who makes a knowledge claim asserts depends upon the epistemic standard of the context in which he makes it. The proposal is that speakers who make knowledge denials in High contexts assert contents about the demanding types of knowledge required by their circumstances. And there is evidence that speakers in High contexts *are* aware of such contents. Suppose you ask a High-context speaker to explain what she means by her knowledge denial. Each of the following responses could be quite natural:

(14) She didn't actually see that John was in; she only saw his hat in the office.
(15) John said that he was in, but there's always the possibility that he was lying.
(16) I can't be absolutely certain that John was in.

Each response indicates that the speaker has in mind a demanding type of knowledge: direct perceptual knowledge in (14), nontestimonial knowledge in (15), and absolutely certain knowledge in (16). The fact that they would be natural responses to requests for explanation or elaboration indicates that High-context speakers *are* aware of contents concerning demanding types of knowledge; that is, just the sorts of contents moderate PC says that they assert.

So we shouldn't expect speakers to be aware, in general, of whether their assertions are enriched, and speakers do seem to be aware of the type of enriched contents moderate PC says are asserted in High contexts. So neither Fantl and McGrath's nor Abath's objection is especially worrisome. But PC is not out of the woods yet. For even when speakers aren't aware that their assertions are enriched, they will, with some prompting, exhibit linguistic behavior that indicates a tacit awareness of the distinction between the content of the sentence they've uttered and the content they've asserted by their utterance. The behavior involves what I'll call *concessive clarifications*. And concessive clarifications are unavailable to High-context knowledge deniers.[19]

To get a sense of the problem, consider a mundane example of narrowing under negation:

(17) S: My daughter doesn't drink milk.
       L: But I thought she was nursing!
       S: Oh, yes, she does drink milk. I just meant that she doesn't drink cow's milk.

---

[19] Thanks to Lenny Clapp, Matthew McGrath, and an anonymous referee for prompting me to reckon with this issue. It is related to an objection to contextualism discussed by Hawthorne (2004, 104–6).

S knew what she was trying to say, and even if the fact that her assertion was not enriched is not obvious to her, the availability of her final clarification indicates that she is sensitive to the difference between the content encoded by "She drinks milk" and "She drinks cow's milk." By contrast, consider:

(18) Louise: I don't know that John was in.
      Police: But I thought you saw his hat in the hall!
      #Louise: Oh, yes, I do know that John was in. I just meant that I didn't actually see him in his office.

The final clarification that the dialogue puts in Louise's mouth is out of bounds. But her knowledge denial is enriched (according to moderate PC) just like the initial utterance in (17), and the interpretive error made by the police is just like that committed by L. So why is the analogous concessive clarification unavailable? More generally: as a rule, High-context speakers can't say, "S knows that P, it's just that S didn't see / isn't certain / can't prove that P." Yet by the lights of moderate PC, some such sentence expresses exactly what is true: though S knows that P, S doesn't know$_h$ that P, where "know$_h$" denotes the type of knowledge needed to meet the demanding standard in place in the High context. Why can't High-context speakers acknowledge the truth while clarifying their communicative intentions?

The answer I propose is that, given moderate PC, we should expect concessive clarifications to be unassertable in High contexts. This follows from the unique normative role played by knowledge claims in discourse. Knowledge claims commit speakers to judgments about assertability. In particular, a speaker who denies knowledge of P to a subject commits himself to the judgment that the subject is not in a position to assert that P (Unger 1975, chap. 6; Williamson 2000, chap. 11). Moore-paradoxical conjunctions provide a common illustration of this link:

(19) #John was in, but I don't know that John was in.

Louise can't assert (19), though it could easily be true. That's because in asserting (19)'s second conjunct, Louise would commit herself to the judgment that she should not assert (19)'s first conjunct.

To capture the link between knowledge claims and assertability judgments, contextualists need a principle that reflects the variability in the truth conditions of knowledge claims. DeRose (2009, 99) gives a contextualist-friendly statement of the link:

Knowledge and Assertability (KA). S is well enough positioned with respect to P to be able to properly assert that P only if S knows that P

according to the standards for knowledge that are in place as S makes her assertion.[20]

KA says that a subject who doesn't meet the standard relevant to knowledge claims in a context is also not in a position to assert in that context. Translated into the language of moderate PC, KA says that when a subject lacks the type of knowledge needed to meet the standard of the context, she's also not in a position to assert in that context:

(KA-PC). S is well enough positioned with respect to P to be able to properly assert that P only if S has knowledge that P of the type required by the epistemic standard in place as S makes her assertion.

Given KA-PC, a subject who doesn't know$_h$ that P isn't in a position to assert that P in a context where h is the relevant standard. So KA-PC implies that concessive clarifications won't be assertable in High contexts. For Louise's concessive clarification would be equivalent to:

(20) I know that John was in, but I do not know$_h$ that John was in.

KA-PC says that in a context where h is the standard relevant to knowledge claims, Louise is in a position to assert that John was in only if she knows$_h$ that John was in. So if (20) is true of Louise, then she is not in a position to assert in a High context that John was in. Since knowledge is factive, if she is not in a position to assert that John was in, she is also not in a position to assert that she *knows* that John was in. Thus (20)'s second conjunct is true of Louise only if she cannot assert its first conjunct in a High context. A concessive clarification is unavailable to Louise for the same reason that she cannot assert (19).

Since, unlike claims about milk, redness, cuts, and the like, knowledge claims play this unique normative role, concessive clarifications of knowledge denials will typically be unavailable to speakers in High contexts. The range of linguistic behavior open to the High-context knowledge denier is narrower than what's available to the speaker who denies that she drinks, says that a watermelon is not red, and so on. This limitation could lead to some bamboozlement for the High-context speaker. Correctly sensing that she cannot offer a concessive clarification, she may be led to blur the distinction between the true knowledge denial she's asserted and the false content of the knowledge-denying sentence she has uttered. Nonetheless the unavailability of concessive clarifications is not evidence against the

---

[20] DeRose's condition is a biconditional, but the sufficiency claim—that is, that if S knows that P (according to the standards for knowledge in her context), then S is well enough positioned to assert P—adds complexity and controversy that is not relevant here.

proposal that High-context knowledge denials are cases of narrowing. On the contrary, given moderate PC and KA-PC, it is exactly what we should expect.

7. Conclusion

PC explains how the knowledge claims made by both speakers in a Low-High pair can be true, and so accommodates the key piece of intuitive linguistic data that contextualism is designed to accommodate. Moreover, PC does not require endorsing the claim that "know" behaves semantically like an indexical or demonstrative, gradable adjective, modal, or any other putatively semantically context-sensitive expression. So it avoids various objections that have been offered against the claim that "know" is a semantically context-sensitive term, including (as we saw in section 5) the difficulty of accounting for the behavior of "know" in disquotational speech reports. Moderate PC enables us to construe High-context knowledge denials as examples of lexical narrowing, and so to assimilate them to a category of enriched assertion that is utterly common in the hurly-burly of ordinary talk. And a potentially troubling difference between such denials and other cases of narrowing can be explained by the unique normative role played by knowledge attributions and denials. Moderate PC should be considered a serious contender in the debate about the truth conditions of knowledge claims.

Department of Philosophy
915 Zulauf Hall
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60510
USA
gpynn@niu.edu

Acknowledgments

References

Abath, André. 2012. "Epistemic Contextualism, Semantic Blindness, and Content Unawareness." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90, no. 3:593–97.
Bach, Kent. 1994. "Conversational Impliciture." *Mind and Language* 9:124–62.

Black, Timothy. 2005. "Classical Invariantism, Relevance and Warranted Assertibility Manoeuvres." *Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 19:328–36.

Blome-Tillman, Michael. 2008. "The Indexicality of 'Knowledge.'" *Philosophical Studies* 138, no. 1:29–53.

Bourget, David, and David Chalmers. 2013. "What Do Philosophers Believe?" *Philosophical Studies* 170, no. 3:465–500.

Brogaard, Berit. 2008. "In Defense of a Perspectival Semantics for 'Know.'" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, no. 3:439–59.

Brown, Jessica. 2006. "Contextualism and Warranted Assertibility Manoeuvres." *Philosophical Studies* 130:407–35.

Cappelen, Herman. 2005. "Pluralistic Scepticism." *Philosophical Perspectives* 19:15–39.

Cappelen, Herman, and John Hawthorne. 2009. *Relativism and Monadic Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cappelen, Herman, and Ernest Lepore. 2005. *Insensitive Semantics: A Defense of Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Carston, Robin. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances: The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cohen, Stewart. 1988. "How to Be a Fallibilist." *Philosophical Perspectives* 2:581–605.

———. 1999. "Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reasons." *Philosophical Perspectives* 13:57–89.

Davis, Wayne. 2007. "Knowledge Claims and Context: Loose Use." *Philosophical Studies* 132:395–438.

DeRose, Keith. 1992. "Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52:913–29.

———. 2009. *The Case for Contextualism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fantl, Jeremy, and Matthew McGrath. 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grice, Paul. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Halliday, Daniel. 2007. "Contextualism, Comparatives and Gradability." *Philosophical Studies* 132, no. 2:381–93.

Harman, Gilbert. 2007. "Epistemic Contextualism as a Theory of Primary Speaker Meaning." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75, no. 1:173–79.

Hawthorne, John. 2004. *Knowledge and Lotteries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hazlett, Allen. 2007. "Grice's Razor." *Metaphilosophy* 38, no. 5:669–90.

Hofweber, Thomas. 1999. "Contextualism and the Meaning-Intention Problem." In Kepa Korta, Ernest Sosa, and Xabier Arrazola, editors, *Cognition, Agency and Rationality*, 93–104. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Kompa, Nikola. 2002. "The Context Sensitivity of Knowledge Attribu-
    tions." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 64, no. 1:1–18.
MacFarlane, John. 2009a. "The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge
    Attributions." *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* 1:197–234.
———. 2009b. "Nonindexical Contextualism." *Synthese* 166, no. 2:231–50.
———. 2014. *Assessment Sensitivity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Montminy, Martin. 2007. "Epistemic Contextualism and the Semantics-
    Pragmatics Distinction." *Synthese* 155:99–125.
———. 2009. "Contextualism, Invariantism, and Semantic Blindness."
    Australasian Journal of Philosophy 87, no. 4:639–57.
Pritchard, Duncan. 2010. "Contextualism, Skepticism, and Warranted
    Assertability Manoeuvres." In Joseph Keim Campbell, Michael
    O'Rourke, and Harry S. Silverstein, editors, *Knowledge and Skepticism*,
    85–103. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
Pynn, Geoff. Forthcoming. "Contextualism in Epistemology." Oxford
    Handbooks Online.
Recanati, François. 2010. *Truth-Conditional Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford
    University Press.
———. 2012. "Pragmatic Enrichment." In Gillian Russell and Delia Graff
    Fara, editors, *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, 67–78.
    New York: Routledge.
Rothschild, Daniel, and Gabriel Segal. 2009. "Indexical Predicates." *Mind
    and Language* 24, no. 4:467–93.
Rysiew, Patrick. 2001. "The Context-Sensitivity of Knowledge Attribu-
    tions." *Noûs* 35, no. 4:477–514.
———. 2007. "Speaking of Knowing." *Noûs* 41, no. 4:627–62.
———. 2011. "Epistemic Contextualism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of
    Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, editor, URL =
    http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/contextualism
    -epistemology/.
Schaffer, Jonathan. 2004. "Skepticism, Contextualism, and Discrimina-
    tion." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69, no. 1:138–55.
Schiffer, Stephen. 1996. "Contextualist Solutions to Scepticism." *Proceed-
    ings of the Aristotelian Society* 96:317–33.
Searle, John. 1980. "The Background of Meaning." In John Searle,
    Ferenc Kiefer, and Mandfred Bierwisch, editors, *Speech Act Theory
    and Pragmatics*, 221–32. Dordrecht: Reidel.
Soames, Scott. 2008. "The Gap Between Meaning and Assertion: Why
    What We Say Often Differs from What We Literally Mean." In *Philo-
    sophical Essays, Volume 1: Natural Language: What It Means and How
    We Use It*, 278–97. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Stainton, Robert. 2010. "Contextualism in Epistemology and the Context
    Sensitivity of 'Knows.'" In Joseph Keim Campbell, Michael O'Rourke,
    and Harry S. Silverstein, editors, *Knowledge and Skepticism*, 113–39.
    Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Stanley, Jason. 2004. "On the Linguistic Basis for Contextualism." *Philosophical Studies* 119:119–46.

———. 2005. *Knowledge and Practical Interests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Szabó, Zoltán Gendler. 2001. "Adjectives in Context." In István Kenesei and Robert M. Harnish, editors, *Perspectives on Semantics, Pragmatics, and Discourse*, 119–46. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Taylor, Kenneth. 2007. "Misplaced Subjects and the Illusion of Opacity." In Michael O'Rourke and Corey Washington, editors, *Situating Semantics: Essays on the Philosophy of John Perry*, 215–50. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Turri, John. 2010. "Epistemic Invariantism and Speech Act Contextualism." *Philosophical Review* 119, no. 1:77–93.

Unger, Peter. 1975. *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williamson, Timothy. 2000. *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Deirdre. 2003. "Relevance and Lexical Pragmatics." *Italian Journal of Linguistics* 15, no. 2:273–91.