Social Mobility in Graduate Recruitment

Potential not polish: what graduate recruiters can learn from contextual admissions to universities

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December 2013

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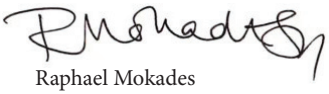
FOREWORD

Many years ago, a Rare candidate went for an interview. "Tell me about yourself" the interviewer said. So the candidate, a student at Cambridge University, did. She explained that, at a young age, she had been taken into care; that she had attended an inner-city, non-selective school where the majority of students did not go on to Higher Education; and that, in the holidays, she lived in a one-room bedsit with her sister. "Yes, but none of that matters now" the interviewer told her. "You're at Cambridge".

The interviewer was, in one sense, right. The candidate was at Cambridge and she had the same opportunities as anyone else at that university. But he missed two things. Firstly, that she wasn't as well-positioned as some of her peers to take advantage of those opportunities: the lack of economic and cultural capital held her back. And secondly, that just going to (a very good) university didn't in fact tell the whole story about this woman. Each university holiday she went back to her old life, in the same place, with the same people she had grown up around. In other words, this interviewer was ignoring the context, and, in so doing, failing to understand – and to assess properly – the candidate before him.

This report aims to deal with issues of context and social mobility by looking at best practice in the university sector and seeing what graduate recruiters can learn from it. I believe that this report is both commercially exciting and socially important. It's commercially exciting, because many of our clients simply sell brainpower – when you engage a law firm or a strategy consultancy or an advertising agency, you are really buying intellect, and the evidence from universities suggests that recruiting in this way gets you better results. And it's socially important because social mobility has stalled in the UK in the last thirty years - and the more people from socially deprived backgrounds who get into top jobs, the more things will start to move again.

I very much hope that you find this report interesting and thought-provoking, and that you will join us in considering context when assessing graduate candidates, by signing up to the Rare Contextual Recruitment Pledge, which is set out on page 77 of this report.



Raphael Mokades
Managing Director, Rare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report

- This is, so far as we can ascertain, the first report linking social theory, university admissions and the practice of social mobility in relation to graduate recruitment.
- We undertook intensive desk research, used Freedom of Information requests, and interviewed admissions staff in universities.
- We also interviewed 23 Rare candidates and alumni to get real case studies and examine how themes of capital and context play out in practice.
- Finally we interviewed a number of Rare clients about their current graduate recruitment practices.

The political and economic context

- The Milburn Report on access to the professions has made social mobility a hot topic in recent years. Political figures including the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, and former Prime Minister, Sir John Major, have made prominent interventions on the topic.
- Despite this, the UK has continued to see widening economic inequality and decreasing social mobility since about 1980.
- A study by the Boston Consulting Group calculates that stalled social mobility is costing the UK between £56bn and £140bn annually in lost GDP.

Bourdieu and capital theory

- We adapt a framework from the French thinker, Pierre Bourdieu, to suggest that the presence or absence of capital may complicate efforts to select solely on grounds of ability.
- Through this lens we examine four types of capital:
  - **Economic capital** refers to your financial circumstances.
  - **Human capital** refers to your behaviour, gestures, accent, body language.
  - **Social capital** refers, in essence, to who you know.
  - **Cultural capital** refers to your broader societal, political and historical awareness.
- Universities want to admit the best and firms want to hire the best. However, assessing motivation and brainpower is not always straightforward with people from low-income, low opportunity backgrounds.

What universities do on contextual admissions

- All the Russell Group universities collect contextual data on social, educational and family background.
- Rather than looking at GCSE, AS Level and A Level results in isolation, universities generally look at them in the context in which they were achieved – that is, they look at the average grade results in a candidate's school or college and compare them with what the candidate has achieved.
- Cambridge University goes further, and uses an algorithm to compare numerically a candidate's performance with the norm in his school or college. This is a simple, effective, easily understood tool – and we believe it would work in graduate recruitment too.
- Universities will not generally use contextual data in a hard and fast way, but use it to support informed professional judgments about who to interview and who to admit. This sometimes includes deciding to interview a candidate with particularly arresting circumstances who is just below the usual cut-off point.
- Some universities run summer schools for candidates from target deprived groups, and may make candidates from these groups alternative (i.e. take a gap year and spend a year reading certain agreed texts before you join us) or lower (i.e. 40 UCAS points below the normal tariff) offers.
- Universities monitor the performance of candidates who were admitted on the basis of contextual data, and the evidence from this monitoring suggests that these candidates perform at least as well as their peers.

Real life case studies: what we learned

- Paper and person are different – CVs and application forms, as currently put together, can only tell you so much.
- How a candidate gets work experience can tell you a great deal about them – about their social capital if all their apparently impressive work experience comes through friends and family, but also about their get up and go when it does not.
- We cannot assume that moving from school to university necessarily constitutes a complete, wholly empowering transition. Knowing whether people are doing paid work during term time at university, and whether they are continuing to live in their parental home, puts their achievements in better context.

Social mobility and race

- We consider the categories of Bourdieusian capital to be useful tools when thinking not just about social mobility, but also about racial diversity.
- The concepts of human capital and cultural capital are particularly relevant when considering issues of race and culture.
- There is also an intersection between race, income, family structure and education. Black people, for example, are actually more likely than white people to go to university. They are however also much more likely to attend the lowest-ranked universities, to continue to live at home, and, in the case of Black Caribbean people, much more likely to come from single-parent families.
- Our model does not necessarily correct for unconscious biases. It also does not directly deal with issues of sexual orientation, disability, or, at least overtly, gender. Our model is therefore not a catch-all framework with which to address diversity. It is, however, extremely useful in the context of social mobility and race.

Recommendations

- Recommendations for firms are included in Chapter Ten of the Report.

ONE

INTRODUCTION

This longitudinal research project, conducted by Rare in 2013, interrogates the use of contextual data within admission processes into UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It looks at outreach, contextual data and differential offers. From this starting point, it aims to establish lines of connection with highly selective leading graduate recruiters. Over five months, the research examined current student admissions practices across 24 HEIs. Situating part of its response in contemporary social theory, it explores connections between recruitment to university and recruitment in the graduate market. We chart current graduate recruitment priorities, systems and aims, and engage with current students and recent graduates. The product, this research, marries theory and practice, and suggests ways in which graduate recruitment might change in the future.

Situating the study

Across the Higher Education sector there is growing interest in the use of contextual data in admissions (Croxford *et al.,* 2013 a,b,c; Mountford-Zimdars and Graham, 2012; SPA, 2010; 2012a,b; Mullen, 2011; Paton, 2011; Henry, 2012). Contextual data is the use of a variety of information sources to establish a clearer, more in-depth expression of the context in which academic (and other) accomplishments were achieved: the circumstances of achievement. At the time of writing, as far as we are aware, this is the first study of its kind. It sits between university admissions and graduate recruitment, thinking through evidence-based, theoretically-informed, research-led context(ualisation) as a strategy for both efficacious recruitment and social mobility.

The project

The study combines analysis and recommendation, and is built around three key questions:

1. How, in what ways, and with what justification, do the UK's leading universities use contextual information and data as part of their admissions procedures?

2. What can graduate recruiters learn from the experiences in Higher Education, with regard to contextual information and social mobility?

3. Combining the above, what frameworks can we build to respond to the use of contextual indicators in graduate recruitment? How might theory and practice combine?

Developing this point further, we apply robust analysis at every level of inquiry. The research seeks to unpick the meaning of terms such as "social mobility", "non-traditional" and "context". Through qualitative interview, literature analyses and the use of theory, we seek to rethink and redeploy them as part of a meaningful framework. We use social theory inspired by the French thinker, Pierre Bourdieu, popular in pedagogical research, and focus on the way people experientially move through life transitions like university and employment, to provide a framework in which context can be used as strategy. This framework allows us to read candidates differently. It is an approach that is responsive to the human element of every admissions process, and provides an adaptable tool for moving toward a system that is both fairer and allows a wider range of high quality people actually to get hired - "social mobility".

Several studies have begun, especially in the last five years, to approach the linked issues of social mobility, higher education and recruitment (The Runnymede Trust, 2010; ECU and SPA, 2011; Professions for Good, 2012; EHRC, 2011). This research piece, however, constitutes the first "thinking-doing" iteration of this agenda, where theory, empirical work and practical tools are gathered together – and we set out some concrete suggestions to graduate recruiters. We envisage this report as a jumping off point, to be followed by extended discussion, data analysis, and refinement.

Navigating a way through

Nine chapters follow, including: a literature review, a short chapter on methodology, a central text exploring research findings inside universities and the qualitative observations, and a set of conclusions and recommendations.

The writing, themes and conclusions subsequently gathered outline what is happening in university admissions, and how this might translate into graduate recruitment. In examining university admissions, special attention is paid to the impact, evidence-base and outcomes of various uses of context and experiments within broader wider-participation agendas. The report provides:

- an overview of current best practice in admissions procedures for all of the UK's Russell Group universities, with particular focus on the most effective, or experimental, case studies from within the sector;
- a commentary on the effectiveness of each programme, with a view to establishing the translatability into a graduate recruitment scenario; and
- a theoretical incursion into processes of assessment, with a particular emphasis on being able to re-work standard terms such as "social mobility" and "potential" so as to provide them with more tangible value inside specific human contexts.

TWO

LITERATURE

The term "social mobility" seems to be everywhere. Nick Clegg, for example, declared in 2012 that "social mobility is a long-term growth strategy and not just a moral imperative"[1]. But what exactly do these words, and the term itself, mean?

This research is part of a conversation that shifts between stagnant or worsening social inequality, increasing governmental pressure for key social, educational and business institutions to stimulate change through a tentatively understood "social mobility" agenda, and an increasing historical emphasis on the freedom of the individual. In the UK, the connection between parental income and an individual's income is pronouncedly determinate compared to other OECD countries (Blanden, 2009). What graduate recruiters – or, indeed, university admissions officers – do, is irreducibly embedded within this context[2].

"Social Mobility"

Especially in the context of Higher Education (HE), the issues of contextual admissions, widening participation, fee rises and social mobility have undergone an intense period of attention during the past ten to fifteen years especially. Similarly, in industry and business, the connection between higher education and graduate recruitment, with increasing rates of youth unemployment and personal debt, have further brought into focus the question of "social mobility" (AGR, 2012) - a theme that expresses the desire to arrest generational cycles of trapped deprivation. This study is therefore in the middle of a pressing social issue. More than that though, this study seeks ways in which social-(in)equality can be brought together with better graduate recruitment, increasing diversity, improving quality, and the inclusion of fantastic candidates from so-called "non-traditional" backgrounds.

> "For universities, too, widening participation holds the prospect of a "win-win" outcome. By drawing on a wider range of applicants, average academic standards of students should rise as enrollment profiles diversity" (Hoare and Johnston, 2010: 1).

Going forward, then, this research broadly understands social mobility as the ability of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to move "up" in society (Croxford, *et al.,* 2013 a,b,c). The measures of this are conflicting, though it is commonly thought of in terms of occupational class or take-home income (Spada, 2012). Here we propose a thinking that links

1 For a full transcript of the speech given to the Sutton Trust: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/deputy-prime-ministers-speech-on-social-mobility-to-the-sutton-trust [date last accessed, November 20, 2013].

2 For an interesting exploration of such thinking, please refer to a three-part BBC television series entitled 'The Trap', by Adam Curtis.

social mobility to Bourdeusian capital (1990) – where we trace four elements of well-being: economic, human, cultural and social to equate to various levels of relative advantage or disadvantage. The research recognises that in considering social mobility in the context of Russell Group universities, the aspect of which we speak is necessarily narrow, given the likelihood that "potential interventions to improve HE participation amongst lower SES[3] groups, (…) are likely to be moving individuals from the middle of the income distribution to the top, rather than improving the social mobility of those at the bottom of the distribution" (Spada, 2012: 25). The scope of potential action contextualised, the concern here is to understand ways in which businesses might simultaneously improve society and their talent pools.

The ambiguity of the term "social mobility" provides an opportunity. It is an opportunity for us to define the terms in which socially mobile mechanisms are implemented; a chance to define social mobility and how we might mobilise it effectively. In this light, we briefly turn to the circumstances in which the term has been taken up in business and (particularly) in the education system as part of the "widening participation agenda".

Widening participation and social mobility: educational disadvantage

"Widening participation in its recent manifestation begins in the late 1990s, more specifically in 1997 when (Tony) Blair and New Labour came to office on a campaign centered around "education, education, education"" (Bhaghat and O'Neill, 2011). Indeed, in 1999, Blair set a "target of 50% of young adults going into higher education in the next century" (Blair, 1999 in Bones, 2012). Widening participation remains an integral aspect of the delivery of HE in the UK.

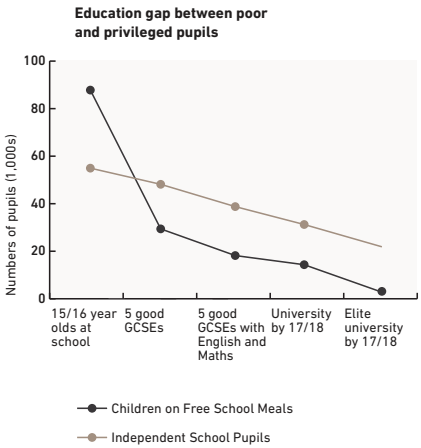
But the landscape is changing. The most recent literature suggests that while the overall rate of participation by young people in HE has increased amongst those in disadvantaged areas, the relative probability that those in such areas will enter the most highly selecting universities has worsened (BIS, 2011; OFFA, 2010). Research carried out by HEFCE (Corver, 2010[4]), found that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged areas have a one-in-five chance of progressing to university compared to a one-in-two chance for those from the more advantaged locales. More than this though, a growing research body understands that a person's social background is equally as influential. For example, the rate of participation in HE, for young people in the lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-7[5]), is around 50% that of the higher groups (NS-SEC 1-3) (see BIS, 2010). Critically, by combining these analyses, and delving deeper into HE progression rates and trends (*cf.* Chowdry *et al.,* 2010), it becomes clear that socio-economic differences in university progression are fundamentally underpinned by educational inequalities. Put differently, the context in which an education is undertaken affects the educational outcome. Context is pivotal.

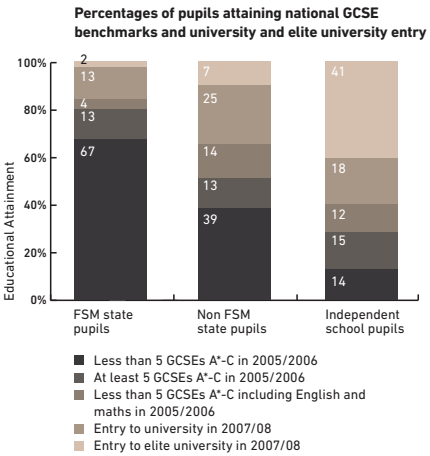
3 SES: socio-economic status.

4 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2010/201003/ [date last accessed, November 20, 2013].

5 National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/soc2010-volume-3-ns-sec--rebased-on-soc2010--user-manual/index.html

Presenting an analysis of student enrollment data (in 2010a), the Sutton Trust charted the educational attainment projections of relatively advantaged and disadvantaged children (a sample of *c.*80,000). In Plates 1 and 2, for example, the educational trajectories of two cohorts of children are tracked from early secondary school and into university. The two groups are differentiated between "those in need", calculated using their eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)[6] at 15/16 years old (GCSE), and those who attend independent schools for GCSE. The analysis uses governmental data of four different measures of academic success at GCSE in 2005/06 (see Sutton Trust, 2010a) and UK university entry statistics for the same group, two years later (2007/08).





University enrollment of Free School Meal pupils
Plate 1. Education gap between under-privileged and privileged pupils
Plate 2. Percentages attaining national GCSE benchmarks

Some key statistics:

- independent school pupils are 22.4 times more likely to attend a highly selective university (defined here as UK's top 30 performing HEIs) as children entitled to FSM;
- fee-paying pupils were three and half times more likely than FSM pupils to attain five GCSEs with grades A*-C; and
- independent school pupils are six times as likely to attend a highly selective university as the majority of state school children not entitled to FSM.

6 FSM is the standard measure, in schools, to identify the most disadvantaged children. To qualify for FSM, households must be in receipt of at least one of the following benefits (as of 6 April 2013 and subject to change): Child Tax Credit (and annual income less than £15,910); Child Tax Credit with Working Tax Credit with and income below £6,420 (for free school meals ONLY); income Support; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Support under Part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999; income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.

It is within this fabric that social mobility and the idea of context have come face-to-face. In short, the argument is that a person on paper is not always a fair reflection of a person's ability and potential to succeed. The person in reality, we suggest, may not have been able to fully express their potential given the context in which they grew up and experienced education, for instance (see Chapter Eight). Indeed, recent government White Papers - *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011) and the strategy *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Social Mobility Strategy* (Cabinet Office, 2011) both refer to the fact that contextual data might be used to identify the applicants with the most potential to succeed. Contextual data is seen to have a clear, and instrumental, social effect. This follows from the landmark Schwartz report of 2004, "Fair Admissions to HE - Recommendations for good practice". This research project provided a driver for institutions to reflect upon and re-think their admissions policies (Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group, 2004). The review concluded that, in order to recruit on the basis of merit and at the same time be "fair" in admissions processes, institutions must not only consider an applicant's formal educational achievement but also contextual factors which can indicate potential and ability. The current, and increasing, use of contextual data, therefore, sits as a mechanism by which institutions might address their widening participation agenda (especially in light of the new OFFA agreements[7], 2012, that all universities hoping to charge the top fee bracket of £9,000 must adhere to). It is thought that tackling widening participation will lead to gradual social change, where young people from disadvantaged backgrounds become increasingly socially mobile and free from the structural circumstances that they might otherwise have been left stranded within.

The use of context by the universities studied deploys a definition of social mobility through widening access. In short, it is about enabling more people from a typically "non-traditional" (pre-university) background - those from geo-demographic areas and familial backgrounds that might not expect, usually, to go to university - to attend. The context of "widening participation" in universities shares many similarities with business, but there is a key difference: a university's outreach and social mobility work is generally directed at actually getting more people from non-traditional backgrounds to attend the universities, whereas much "social mobility" work in business is driven by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) teams rather than by recruitment need. This research sets out to rethink these terms, in a bid to mobilise a form of "social mobility" that clearly and beneficially rests within the direct processes of recruitment - and aims to improve businesses. The social mobility agenda, in short, should be a talent agenda.

Social mobility and business:

Individuals from both low and middle-income families can face several barriers to entry into the professions. Research by the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions (2009) found that these barriers include poor guidance and advice, a lack of awareness, difficulties in obtaining work experience, demoralisation and under-developed soft skills. "Both access to

7 Universities are expected to support outreach from the extra income generated from higher fees – with commitments to outreach outlined in new access agreements with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). For more information on OFFA, see Appendix Two.

and progression within the professions have been highlighted as areas of concern here (…) and in the Government's social mobility strategy" (Spada, 2012: 18). It is then perhaps within this perspective, as firms look to diversify their intake - maximising both their social role, and improving the quality, range and experience base of their hires - that the research findings might find their traction. However, when we say that "diversity improves quality", we often accept the statement without much interrogation. It might follow that in briefly outlining aspects of this accumulative effect, we approach a stronger, and more embedded, rationale for wholeheartedly pursuing the strategies this research analyses and outlines.

> "(S)ocial mobility in recruitment is not an exercise in good citizenship. It is best practice, and it offers clear business benefits" -- AGR, 2012.

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), working for the Sutton Trust investigating the link between education performance and GDP gains in different countries, found that "**weakening the link between background and achievement in the UK would contribute between £56billion and £140billion to the value of the economy each year** by 2050" (2010: 3). That is the equivalent of an additional 4% GDP each year[8].

Diverse intakes offer several business benefits (BIS, 2013; Ely and Thomas, 2001; AGR, 2012). A paper commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2013) broadly split tangible benefits into two categories: internal and external. External business benefits might be thought of as the more accurate representation of the world by firms. The example given is that employees with roots in other countries, cultures and experiences drawn from a diverse array of life experiences enable businesses to better address their products, services and activities. It also means an increased sensitivity to the nuances of certain new markets, or clients for instance, that has a multiplier effect within an organisation (*e.g.* Cox & Blake,1991). Internal business benefits arise from improving operations internal to the firm. For example, a diverse workforce recruited from a broad and "non-traditional" pool will include a range of perspectives, creativity, problem-solving skills and thinking (*e.g.* Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005). The diverse workforce will often be an attractor in itself, drawing in and retaining the best people for organisations akin to the cultural "melting pot" notion of Gilroy (1994)[9]. There is a need for further research on specific organisational contexts, the programmes invoked and the work undertaken, but overall, the large swathe of literature (especially that outlined in BIS, 2013), constitutes a suggestive and provoking business case.

Social mobility and race

> "Masked by the global figure that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds have a higher participation rate in HE than their white counterparts, issues of race and ethnicity seem to have fallen from the widening participation agenda" (Berkeley, 2010).

8 See also: Spada 2012 and research by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2011).

9 For a thorough and comprehensive analysis of benefits and overview of literature, please consult the insightful https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49638/the_business_case_for_equality_and_diversity.pdf [date last accessed, November 20, 2013]. See also, Talent not Tokenism, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2008) http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Employers/talentnottokenism.pdf [date last accessed, November 20, 2013].

What Rob Berkeley, Director of the Runnymede Trust, strikes upon is an account that elides several harsher realities. Black and minority ethnic (BME)[10] students disproportionately attend less prestigious institutions, study lower status subjects, are more likely to drop out, and are less likely to attain the highest qualifications (Institute of Education). **One third of black (African-Caribbean) students** – in contrast to Chinese, Other Asian and Mixed Ethnicity students – **attend a total of 7 Higher Education institutions (HEIs), all in London, and all but one ranked in the bottom fifth** of HEIs. Within the 20 Russell Group universities, of UK undergraduates starting degree courses (where ethnicity is known), an average of 82% are white, compared with an average of 2.6% black students.

Overall, BME students are clustered around predominantly post-1992 universities. Some explanation might come in the decisions of certain BME students to stay local to their homes or choose to live at home and commute. Studies also report tendencies for bias according to choice of subjects, whereby BME students are concentrated on traditional, professional degree programmes such as Medicine, Dentistry, Law and Business. The choices may reflect socio-cultural / familial influences, financial burdens and perceived employment opportunities. In such circumstances BME students may apply for courses they have either little interest in, or poor educational preparation for. This might then affect application success, university retention and degree attainment.

A range of factors will be at work including selected application for certain courses, educational histories, access to opportunity structures, knowledge, advice, funding and experiences that might prepare the candidate well for interview. Critically, procedures therefore that accept problems and work with the ideas of potential (situating students against their backgrounds and opportunities), ability and unconscious biases[11] might offer ways forward for fairer access. Undeniably, the best students should be encouraged to apply for the best institutions, and early grass-roots work, with teachers and by university outreach schemes, to improve knowledge and foster aspiration, is an obvious starting point. This, however, must also be grounded by an engagement with the fact that the latest research from the Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2010) suggests that BME young people are disproportionately affected by various hardships during their progression through university (Weekes-Bernard, *et al.* 2010).

Black entrants into HE are usually older than white and other BME cohorts. Of these, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi participation rates are half those of Black Africans and Indians (Singh, 2011). It is more common for BME groups to enter HE through vocational routes rather than via traditional academic qualifications. Several studies have found that Bangladeshi and Pakistani students enter HE with lower levels of prior academic achievement.

While BME participation is quite variable across ethnic groups, in relation to success the broad pattern is one of BME under-achievement (Fielding *et al.*, 2008). Work by Strand (2007)

10 'BME' itself is a complicated and contested term, used to describe a wide range of minority communities living in the UK (black, Asian, and mixed-race, for instance). Indeed, several trends and differences must be observed within the BME category itself (Oware, 2013). 'Racialised as black' is a more accurate term with which to describe 'black students' but that, for our purposes here, we will use 'BME/black'.

11 See footnote 33.

highlights that Black Caribbean students do not lack aspiration; instead they lack the knowledge and networks to successfully navigate through HE and exploit available opportunities. The reasons for the degree attainment gap are complex, variable upon gender, social deprivation, disability and previous family experiences of HE. However evidence still suggests[12] that, even when extant factors are controlled, there is a statistically significant impact on attainment caused by being from an ethnic minority.

Nor does this gap end after university. On leaving HE, BME students are less likely to be employed 6 months after graduation, and, even in initial employment, they can "expect to earn up to 9 per cent less for the same work as a white graduate over five years."[13]

Taking all this into account, we must remember, when thinking in terms of social inequality or social mobility, that some forms of inequality particularly affect people from ethnic minority groups.

We therefore suggest that social mobility is a term that incorporates in its lived reality a range of different factors including those of race, socio-economics, and gender for instance. This "deep intersectionality" is gathered into these terms. The relative advantages or disadvantages that might apply in an upbringing accumulate differently between individuals. We should not assume that a young white woman from a single-parent family in a low-performing geo-demographic area will have suffered the same disadvantages as a young black man from a similarly single-parent family[14], in the same area. That is why the category of social mobility must be made sensitive to the multitude of ways disadvantage can accumulate and be expressed. Rare turns to the sociological concept of capital theory as a measure of, and a way of seeing, these embedded effects (below).

Bourdeusian capital theory

Here we turn to a theory inspired by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930 - 2002), relating to the accumulation and expression of capital. This theory is used by the authors in this context in order to begin to understand ways in which the term "social mobility" is actually realised within a living human being: including the gestural, dispositional, and in-built elements of disadvantage. We use four key (overlapping) conceptions that begin to explain how it is that (dis)advantage might lodge itself into a person:

- **economic capital:** the capabilities an individual has to be able to compete economically in society. The opportunities – or missed opportunities - associated with low economic capital (parental income, place of residence etc) are particularly important here.
- **human capital:** behavioural, gestural, manneristic, often unconscious situational awareness - deeper, subtle and reflexive forms of "knowing how to be" that accumulate differentially while growing up. For instance, those that went to debating club, those that had opportunity to become ingrained with the social heterodoxy when it comes to "small

12 Broecke and Nichols (2007) Ethnicity and Degree Attainment. Department for Education and Skills Research.
13 Elevation Networks and the Bow Group (2011).
14 According to the latest figures, there are 2 million single-parent families, 22% of all families. 13% of these are from ethnic minorities – that is just over 260,000. 8% of all single-parent families are led by a male. Lone parent families made up around a quarter of Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Black Caribbean and Black African families compared to an average across all groups of one in ten. See http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/themes/families.html and https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214568/rrep782.pdf [date last accessed, November 25, 2013].

talk", eye contact and interaction (some of this can be understood through school type, experiences, parental occupations, cultural heritage (customs and traditions that have an effect on natural behaviours)).

- **social capital:** the most frequently used inflection of Bourdieu. Social capital refers to the extent and granularity of an individual's network, social exposure, opportunity, support systems and social leverage.
- **cultural capital:** a tangential outcome of all the above, cultural capital refers to broader societal, political, and historical awareness; general interests, exposure to the arts: theatre, literature and cinema. Something often expressed as a world view, being worldly, well-read, and fundamentally interesting. It is closely correlated with education. In school, children with low cultural capital do not only have to learn information, but they have to learn the way to think, process, communicate and express that information.

This articulation of Bourdieu takes the clichéd notion of "nature or nurture" and expresses a person's life course as intimately interwoven into the fabric of their upbringing, their environment, school, exposures and habits. In Bourdieu's theory, each individual is an active participant / agent in a field of play where not everybody is evenly attributed capital. A measure on the capability of a person to perform and succeed in this field is provided by assessing their habitus (what we might understand as how someone comes across, how capable they are, how we perceive their capability and so on). This is set out in the diagram below:

Plate 3: Habitus

Capital, thought in this way, is a three-dimensional space. It should be understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital, human capital and social capital. It provides a lens upon capability.

While this theoretical exploration has been brief, and abstracted somewhat from its original author, the realities for our analysis here are important. Thinking with and through capital allows us to better appreciate forms of capital accumulation and how they might factor into how someone appears to us during the recruitment process, and within our organisations. Many are familiar with the term "social capital" as a way of understanding an individual's personal connections, or the connectedness of their family, but it is with the three other categories that we are able to appreciate difference as it accumulates through race, gender, socio-economics, schooling, coaching, cultural heritage and cultural exposure.

This framework is, we believe, the key to recruiting – and retaining – people who are different.

THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out between July and November 2013. A total of 24 Higher Education institutions (the entire Russell Group) are included in the analysis, as are several Rare clients, from the public sector, banking and the law. We conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 10 different representatives of four leading Russell Group universities, and six graduate recruiters. The rest of the of the admissions / recruitment systems research took the form of policy, discourse and desk-based analysis from publicly available information sources as well as information gathered under Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

The other half of the research involved a series of 23[15] interviews conducted in a period of five weeks between July and August 2013. These interviews complement the systems-based research by exploring how categories of capital and methods of context might begin to approach an understanding of individuals and their lives. Below, the details of this mixed-method research methodology are briefly outlined.

Desk research and institution / organisation interviews

The research into the use of contextual data covered academic research, unpublished university-specific recordings and notes, and research-led projects by organisations such as Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), and the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR). Large institution sponsored "grey literature" was also examined, often produced by universities looking to reflect on the effect and after-image of strategic intervention. Several independent reports by the Sutton Trust, and the Sutton Trust with Boston Consulting Group (BCG), were considered alongside government white papers, speeches, newspaper articles, critical commentary, news programmes, radio broadcasts and many other sources of relevant and appropriate engagement.

In assessing specific university processes, and understanding the concerns and aims of some of Rare's clients, we gathered information from institutions in terms of their history, policies, types and mission in order to best understand the use of contextual data and for clients, general organisational needs and current recruitment practices.

15 Given the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the sample size is not seen here as a problem, as it would be within more positivist perspectives (Holloway, 2004). The depth of analysis demanded by a psychosocial approach produces a tendency toward small sample sizes. It is maintained that, contrary to critique that might suggest that only statistical sampling and analysis can be representative, the results from these interviews, embedded within broader theoretical frameworks, and augmented by findings from other mixed-method proposals, have plenty of reach, and maintain a 'validity' (however this word is taken to resonate) as research products.

Participant observation and interviews with candidates

The method behind the interviews aimed to be attentive on two levels: (a) the conscious, discursive and linguistic (what is said) and (b) the dispositional, gestural and sub-conscious (what isn't said, but what still speaks). To do so, interviews were loosely structured around the so-called psycho-social interview format. This approach uses an open-ended dialogic interview method that pays attention to the complex interactions that occur between interviewer and interviewee. This form of psychosocial interview[16] originated in relational psychoanalysis (Lucey *et al.*, 2003; Frosh, 2003; Holloway, 2004) but here is re-worked to create a co-constitutive dialogical narrative approach, that means both interviewer and interviewee write the script. There was no set list of questions: the aim was to follow the flow and understand how we might find new ways of understanding the interview situation and how people express themselves.

Thinking again of Bourdeusian capital, we were interested to find out how capital might accumulate differentially, and how our interviews might be said to express that difference. In tracing the idea of accumulation we were able to do two things:

1. understand what elements of a graduate recruitment process might pick up, or unintentionally ignore; and
2. understand the role of facilitators, such as Rare, in enabling candidates to display certain types of capital or indeed, provide them with elements of capital.

Interviews would usually last about an hour but could be longer or shorter given the nature of the discussion. Candidates were approached either by email or phone call.

Topics of discussion

The four main areas of focus for each interview were, broadly speaking, (1) family, (2) experiences in school, (3) the transition to and experiences in university and (4) the transition to work. These all sought to understand the nature of each individual's formative experiences and the context in which they influenced or were undertaken (depending on the topic).

Use of candidate records

The Rare database was also used to collect information on candidates' GSCE and A Level grades. Although this usually came up in conversation, the database was used to check schools and extra-curricular attainment. Other factors considered were candidate inputs in the Rare application of examples of leadership and membership, and any examples of work experience which were not mentioned in our interview.

16 Also described as psycho-social interviews. Emphasis here is on the hyphen which separates the two realms as if to imply a distinction between the two. In this study, psychosocial is used without a hyphen; thereby drawing focus upon relationality in the sense of the interview, in terms of a student's upbringing and how all of this is gathered in the terms context and capital.

Use of contextualising data

When candidates provided the names of their schools, consideration was given to their respective Ofsted reports, their position in the local and national tables and information on the schools' recent history (improvements or otherwise), keeping in mind the fact that candidates had already left school when some of the latest reports were published. Data was sometimes collected from ACORN (see Chapter Five) in attempting a broader evaluation of a candidate's economic capital.

Participant observation / extra-discursive attention

Participant observation builds on the social scientific notion of ethnographic research, the literal "writing of experience" (*e.g.* Geertz, 1973). In this research, the aim was to be able to appreciate, or at least be open to, levels of communication that happen beyond words during interviews and interactions. It is an attempt to engage empirically with notions of unconscious bias, and, more abstractly, how forms of human capital might accumulate during someone's life-course to enable them to be adaptable, "kind" or "give off a nice impression" and so on. This element of the interview process is an understanding, in a way, of what people do, not what they say they do; understanding the role of the researcher, too, as an active agent in the "data" that is gathered.

FOUR

OUTREACH: PRACTICE, PARTICIPATION AND PIPELINES

This area of the research considered the application of contextual data in the delivery of university admissions processes. We sought to gain an overview of the use, purpose, methodologies and impact of contextual data; to find out where it is being used effectively and to identify transferability of practice; and to identify what potential impact it could have on fair admissions, social mobility and graduate recruitment.

The following few chapters work between two ways of looking at outreach and admissions being the two elements of student recruitment (see Plate 4). The movement in "A" describes a tightly woven flow between outreach efforts and actual applications. Outreach, here, aims to secure applications to the organisation in question. "B", on the other hand, describes a more diffuse process. Outreach, here, is less focused: the output is only tangentially related to actual applications. We might think of "B" as typical of "widening participation efforts, usually collected, in business terms, under the umbrella of CSR. The outputs are more varied, usually thought of in terms of inspiration, aiming high, and general industry knowledge.

Here, however, our research suggests ways of bridging the gap between "A" and "B": universities have diversified their intake while maintaining academically exceptional standards, through coupled outreach: application / widening participation: application processes. We work through the examples of summer schools, university-led engagements, and the idea of network facilitators.

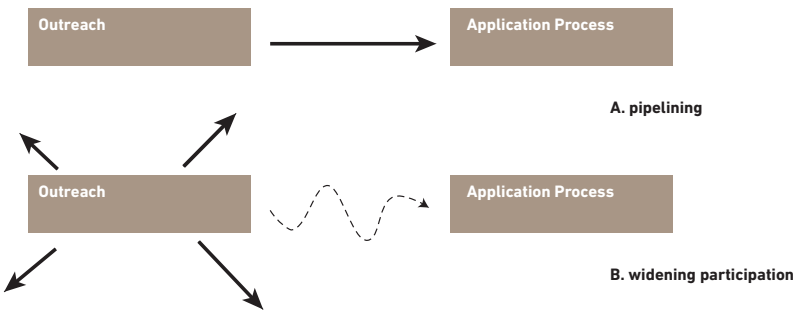


Plate 4. Different modalities of outreach

The empirical work below unfolds in three stages: outreach, pipelining and admissions processes. In each section we look at elements that might be transferrable to graduate recruitment.

Outreach

With the funding changes brought about by the fee rises (2012) in particular, but across the past ten years more generally, there has been increased emphasis on the strategic role of outreach in every admissions process. Indeed, OFFA has, for the past three years, urged universities to diversify their widening participation spend. This diversification entails a spending move away from student financial support, deemed ineffective (OFFA, 2010), towards outreach. There are two forms that become evident from the university research: (1) widening participation (specifically to host universities *e.g.* summer schools directly connected to subsequent university admissions) and (2) a more general widening access drive which aims to inspire and encourage cohorts of youths to think about, and apply to, university.

The schemes referred to in the second description, widening participation or access schemes, allow students from under-represented backgrounds to learn more about higher education. There is a subtle difference between these schemes and those that also engage with under-represented groups and also provide supported entry routes into (their) university. These, with one eye on the business-translatable context, we might call pipelining schemes. Sometimes, the alternative entry-route into HE offered by the programme is based on alternative offer, or necessary adjustments made on the basis of fulfilling certain criteria. This alternative offer, for instance, is usually enabled by the successful completion of a given programme, which itself provides additional weight to an application. Moreover, it is increasingly common for some Russell Group universities to also run separate foundation years (or forms of deferred entry) for students who have been identified as having the potential to succeed at the university, and on the course, but at the time of applying did not have the necessary grades or subjects to progress directly through the traditional route.

What is a non-traditional student?

The term "non-traditional" is frequently used in both university and business outreach. Evidently, the "non-traditional" is entirely contingent upon the context of the organisation that uses it, in that the non-traditional is defined against the "traditional". Broadly speaking, it is the non-traditional student that the elements of contextual identification are designed to gain a greater hold upon, for example:

- students whose parents have not attended university;
- students from a poorly performing school background;
- students from a school with a relatively low-rate of progression to HE;
- students who reside in a low-income geodemographic area;
- students who have spent a period of time in care during their upbringing;
- students with refugee / asylum-seeker status;
- students from an under-represented ethnic heritage group; and
- students from lone-parent families.

These are merely examples, but they highlight the way students can be selected for outreach programmes and illustrate the diverse nature of "non-traditional" students. This will be important to bear in mind when we first consider the various pipelining programmes currently in use by UK HEIs, and further on, when we consider steps that Rare's clients might take in the future.

Case studies: pipelines and summer schools

Twelve Russell Group universities[17] are involved in *Realising Opportunities* (RO), a collaboration that works to promote fair access to higher education and encourage social mobility, for students from under-represented groups identified as having potential. These students are supported through a programme that aims to raise their aspirations to progress to a research-intensive university, and develop their skills and knowledge (human and social capital) so that they are able to make informed choices about their futures. The programme also contains significant and longitudinal academic elements that are assessed as part of the course's duration. Overall, participation in the programme leaves students better equipped, and more confident in their ability to succeed at university. More than this though, the participant universities account for RO students in their recruitment processes too. Leeds University, for instance, states in its OFFA Agreement 2013 that "successful completion of RO, which includes a robust academic element, will result in additional consideration given to applications through UCAS from all 12 universities". Indeed, going further, Leeds has in place a structure that will, if appropriate, afford an RO participant an alternative university offer worth up to an additional 40 UCAS points (see Table 1). There are two things particularly worthy of note here: (1) the cross-institutional partnership, and (2) how this partnership translates into stakeholder agreed adjustment in offers for RO participants.

Taking inspiration from such schemes, where is it sensible, cost-effective and valuable to intervene? This brief section is following the experience of UK universities in extending their outreach towards a broader cohort of potential applicants; across non-traditional and unrepresented sociodemographic and geographic spaces. As evidenced in research by the Boston Consulting Group (2010), the experience of Sutton Trust Summer Schools, coaching programmes and targeted outreach activities demonstrates a 50% greater chance of application success from under-represented groups (Hoare and Mann, 2011).

By exploring these intervention techniques in the table below (Table 1), it is hoped that we might begin to understand how Rare's clients can translate the university experience into their own processes, and what the benefits are of doing so. It is back to these indicative case studies that we now turn.

Sutton Trust Summer Schools and others

The Sutton Trust Summer Schools are free, subject-specific, residential courses for Year 12 students from UK state schools. They allow high-potential students from under-privileged backgrounds an insight into university life and all its aspects from study to day-to-day living as

17 Including: Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, King's College London, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Warwick, and York. There are 15 universities involved in total.

an undergraduate student. Students are selected on merit through a multi-point framework that contextualises their socioeconomic background. This identifies students who:

- are first generation in their family to attend university;
- achieve at least 5 As or A*s at GCSE (or equivalent);
- are taking subjects in relation to the subject stream they are applying for;
- attend schools or colleges with a low overall A Level attainment (or equivalent) point score and/or schools or colleges with low progression rates to higher education;
- come from neighbourhoods with low overall progression rates to higher education or high levels of socio economic deprivation[18];
- are (or have been) looked after, or accommodated, in care; and
- are under the age of 18 at the time of the summer school.

As outlined in the Literature Review, major recent changes have taken place to university funding and recruitment rules for UK HEIs (Hoare and Mann, 2011). The social context of HE has contributed to a reduction in the gross levels of so-called "widening participation" students (those from under-represented groups) who are applying to university. This trend is particularly pronounced in the most highly-selecting research intensive Russell Group members, particularly so for the most selective and competitive universities, the so-called "elites". In this climate, outreach activities, forefront among them (for their pipelining potential) summer schools, are a vitally important part of the widening participation (WP) policies they pursue.

The Sutton Trust's programme of Summer Schools is the UK's largest cross-university national-scale outreach programme. In 2010 the Sutton Trust commissioned research that showed, if an applicant does not come from a family which possesses "relevant cultural and social capital" (see Chapter Two[19]), then the range and ability to capitalise on choice is curtailed, or reduced, thereby affecting an applicant's choice, and the information available to them. The study, presenting a case for targeted and informative outreach, found that pupils who had parents that had not been to university were only likely to apply to the more selective, better ranked, higher entry, universities if they were predicted to achieve high grades. Conversely, students whose parents had gone to university were more likely to apply to these universities even with lower predicted grades. Against this backdrop, analysis by UCAS found that students who attended these summer schools were three times as likely to apply to one of the summer school universities as applicants from similar backgrounds and with similar levels of attainment, and 60% began their degree at a Russell Group university. Here we see the value-added benefit of such programmes. We see **a transformation in the natural accumulation of capital**.

18 Polar 2 data (see Chapter Six)
19 In the context of race, and the broader theories outlined, we might add to this human and economic capital too.

Below we see a range of these examples of pipelining: Outreach programmes that engage social mobility and ensure that institutions are actually recruiting the very best with the highest potential.

University	Pipelining programme and details
Newcastle University - PARTNERS (and Realising Opportunities)	Newcastle has a broad and wide-ranging programme of outreach. Its flagship scheme, PARTNERS, is an example of a form of high level talent pipelining. It identifies, through the PARTNERS Programme, "able, talented young people of high potential who may be at risk of not progressing to HE because of socioeconomic, personal or educational disadvantage factors, and supports them in the transition from school or college to university" (OFFA Agreement 2013: 7). Students can receive a "PARTNERS" offer, slightly lower than the standard offer. Newcastle is also the lead university for RO, and considers adjusted offers for students who participate on the programme (even if not at its institution) but apply to Newcastle during the UCAS university admissions window.
Manchester Access Programme (MAP) - Manchester University	The programme is the university's leading access scheme for Y12/13 students in the Greater Manchester area. It supports the progression of students particularly to Manchester, but also other research-intensive leading Russell Group universities. It is a two-year scheme for students who satisfy specific academic and background criteria.
Access to Bristol (as well as Realising Opportunities and Sutton Trust Summer Schools)	On the basis of participation in the Bristol University Sutton Trust Summer School, those students who then apply to Bristol University will be given a guaranteed conditional offer if they meet the general academic criteria.
Liverpool Scholars Scheme - University of Liverpool	The scheme is targeted at Year 12 students from underrepresented groups. Like similar programmes in this list, scholars are given advice and support to help them gain a place at a research-intensive university. On successful completion of the project, which includes an academic assignment, applicants are given the equivalent of up to 40 UCAS points towards entry. Becoming a Scholar also gives young people the maximum financial bursary from the university. Around 100 scholars are recruited each year.

University	Pipelining programme and details
University of Leeds and University of Exeter - the STAR programme	Sutton Trust Academic Routes (STAR) programme – run in collaboration with the universities of Exeter and Leeds – targets the top 10% of bright but disadvantaged students in low progression schools who live in the local areas. The idea is to support them over the three years prior to university admission (i.e. starting in Year 11), with the objective of encouraging them to apply to high quality universities.
Realising Opportunities	The target recruitment across all 15 universities for 2013/14 is 750 students. According to research undertaken by the HEFCE, where RO students were analysed against a control group of two cohorts of students with comparable levels of academic attainment (not part of the scheme): (i) 86.5% of the RO students were accepted to HE via UCAS as compared with an acceptance rate of 27.2% for the control group. (ii) the proportion of RO students progressing to the most selective third of institutions was 8.8% higher than the control group. Every participant who takes part in the full Realising Opportunities Programme, and who applies to one of the fifteen universities that organise it, will be given extra consideration in their application at the point of submitting their UCAS. In some cases, e.g. Newcastle, Manchester and Leeds, this will directly lead to an alternative RO offer being made of, for example, a reduction of up to 40 UCAS points, and general "guaranteed conditional status", providing all other academic stipulations are met.

Table 1. Access and pipelining across the Russell Group

So what can we learn?

What all of these programmes share is a clearly defined (research based) and transparent focus. They target a specific portion of the population. They mobilise an array of value-added, incentivised (in terms of a lower offer) and attractive programmes to find, and hold the attention of, those students from non-traditional backgrounds who have the potential, sometimes without realising, to attend such leading institutions.

One thing that these examples suggest as a point of action is graduate recruitment intervention through pre-university ("early intervention") programmes. Thinking holistically about the research thus far, these straddle the boundary between doing good and doing good business. Indeed, they tread a gentle line between social justice (CSR) efforts; reputation building, community engagement, and the idea that talent can be engaged at an early age, and drawn under a client's wings.

Universities "do" outreach in two ways. One is led specifically by the organisation / institution itself. In the examples above, this involves local engagement to find in schools the students with the highest potential and putting them onto a mutually beneficial programme, that in the end leads to an offer (and acceptance) of admission. The other move is a collaborative one. It is a move that acknowledges the limited geographic scope of organisations and encourages them to use the networks of other universities, or third-party facilitators to send out the opportunities that exist.

To understand how outreach communicates with the actual admissions process, and where / how pipeline schemes touch admissions, we must turn to the process itself.

FIVE

ADMISSIONS: WHAT PROCESSES DO UNIVERSITIES USE TO RECRUIT?

By analysing university admissions, the incorporation and deployment of contextual data, as well as the effects and justification of these moves, this chapter not only outlines, mechanically, how institutions/organisations might broaden their reach, but it begins to explore the derived benefits of doing so.

The process: applying for university

All potential students wishing to study an undergraduate full-time course at a UK HEI apply to and through the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS)[20]. HEIs are autonomous organisations, determining their own entrance requirements, which vary internally based upon subject choice, department, and college (where applicable). All applications for full-time, access and sandwich courses at UCAS member institutions are made through this online UCAS process. The application form collects information on an applicant's personal details, course choices, educational attainment, employment history, and contextual information under the section "Additional information", as well as a personal statement, and teacher reference (Mullen, 2011). It is to the category of contextual information, though, that we first turn.

Using Context

> "Equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations." Schwartz Report (2004: 5)

Context, here, refers to a varied array of information relating to the conditions under which a candidate's academic and non-academic life unfolded. It is these circumstances that, in various guises, might be drawn into the application process. Contextual data, loosely invoked, has been used by universities since 2004, and has been available to them through UCAS, for example, since 2008.

The 2004 Schwartz report suggested that in order to recruit fairly and meritocratically, in an environment where each applicant will have different experiences and life narratives, the hard lines of educational attainment were not enough to enable fair evaluation. Research before and since has indicated prior academic achievement as the greatest indicator of potential university success. The Schwartz Report suggested expanding the range of considerations through educational, familial and, more generally speaking, contextual thought. This led to

20 In the administration of Higher Education in the UK, particularly as it relates to the case of 'contextual admissions', there are a number of key facilitators that are briefly outlined in Appendix Two (SPA and OFFA). Understanding their strategic role in the university application process, and its course through contextualised nets of assessment, will be important when considering the case studies and how they might then be pushed towards a graduate recruitment scenario.

the increasing uptake and consultation of so-called circumstantial / contextual information in admission procedures.

The argument is that the reliance on prior educational achievement, can, in some cases, obscure the learning potential of some applicants, whose previous experiences have prevented their full expression. The introduction of contextualised admissions processes, as part of a broader, and informed, access strategy normally refers "to the ability of HEIs' admission processes which take account of an individual's achievements and potential, with reference to the overall school performance at which that individual's compulsory education was undertaken" (Mullen 2011: 11; Mullen 2010). This process is about using a range of factors to create a relative assessment of an individual's attainment. Some of this information is self-declared as part of the UCAS application: whether the candidate has been in care, suffered from debilitating illness, looks after dependents, or suffers from a disability, for instance. This information is collected together with other forms too, including extenuating circumstances (that might be expressed in references, or within tailor-built interfaces *e.g.* Warwick, York, Sheffield and Cambridge Universities (see below)), as well as hard data from publicly available sources (Department of Education, and UCAS for instance). Finally, in recent years, there has been a growth in the use of commercial data through ACORN.[21] Overall this creates a relatively broad and, depending on how it is gathered together, deep profile of an applicant.

Accordingly, the approaches to contextualising admissions and the range of data and information employed are diverse, though it is possible to differentiate between these methods by considering the use of:

- **contextual data:** data based on educational or socio-demographic[22] background is used to provide impetus for a flagging system that informs admissions selectors of particular, and recognised, disadvantages (usually used in the most highly selecting institutions);
- **contextual information:** which might include more "human" elements of disadvantage, less susceptible to z-scores and algorithms, such as illness and particular personal circumstances. This is usually gathered through a subjective assessment of a collection of available sources such as the personal statement or teacher reference; and
- **contextualisation:** an antecedent strategy that takes place prior to the application, for example through the participation of the applicant in targeted, and accredited, outreach activity (e.g. Summer Schools, PARTNERS, Realising Opportunities, and so on).

21 For an in-depth breakdown of the 'UCAS basket' of data provided in 2013, see Appendix Three.

22 While geodemographic data such as ACORN (Oxford University) or OAC and POLAR3 (Cambridge University) can successfully identify segments of the population that are either currently under-represented in applications in HE applications, or socioeconomically disadvantaged; universities recognise that the data is not catch-all. Such data can provide useful indications of socio-economic status or likelihood of participation in higher education for a neighbourhood, but they are not blanket and explanatory. Indeed, the circumstances of an individual are not necessarily the same as those of the area in which they live. The information must be considered relationally with all other sources throughout the process (see Chapter Eight).

These approaches are not mutually exclusive and may be used in combination: all can have a place in the delivery of a fair admissions process. Broadly speaking, contextual data is used (taken from Mountford-Zimdars and Graham (SPA), 2012):

- to widen participation – to target aspiration raising;
- to inform the decision as to who to interview;
- to inform admissions decision making to enable the "best students" to be admitted and retained (as defined by the HEI);
- to identify applicants who may need additional learner support or practical advice during their application process, transition or when registered as a student;
- to help assess applicants for financial/ in-kind support – scholarships and bursaries; and
- for statistical and qualitative monitoring and reporting purposes.

By examining all 24 Russell Group universities, the research was able to understand the extent to which contextual considerations have been taken up in actual policy. The results are summarised in the table below.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
University of Birmingham	Does not currently use contextual information or data. But runs the "Access to Birmingham" programme that increases social mobility in the Midlands area. For Programme participants, upon completion, some adjusted offers might be made.
University of Bristol *	Bespoke, WP agenda: "Realising Potential" 2009-16. Applications considered on individual basis. Academic potential with educational and social background consultation. Summer School offers. Adjusted offers. Contextual scoring system (algorithm) used too. Flexible. Research and evidence-based intervention. Does not use parental occupation and parental background information.
University of Cambridge	Mathematical algorithms used to rank student's GCSE and AS Level grades against average school-level achievement. Produces scored value that is ranked against other applicants. Use of four categories of contextual flag: (1) in care (2) socio-economic (3) school (4) extenuating circumstances form (ECF). Context used to push flagged applicants to interview spaces.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
Cardiff University	Contextual admissions model, entitled "additional consideration". Research suggests that antecedent disadvantages still apply at 21 too. Use UCAS, HEFCE, Welsh Government, ACORN and POLAR data. No adjusted offers. Application flagged for additional attention: (1) guaranteed offer (2) guaranteed interview (3) additional consideration at summer results period. Flags: socioeconomic disadvantage, low participation neighbourhood, in care.
Durham University	UCAS basket[21] of contextual information, and neighbourhood progression. Summer school / outreach participation, and school performance all taken into consideration. No lower offers.
University of Edinburgh *	Three contextual measures are used as "WP indicators" in admissions: (1) two most deprived quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), linked to postcode and home address. (2) two last quintiles of classification of schools based on average rates of progression to HE per school. (3) prior selection for the Lothians Equal Access Partnership for Schools (LEAPS), which takes account of family circumstances.
University of Exeter **	"Admissions and WP policy group". Prospective students considered for "exceptional adjustment based on extenuating circumstances". Contextual basket of UCAS data considered upon teacher/reference request. "The educational performance of an applicant's school or college is considered as part of the holistic assessment of an applicant's potential to succeed at the University and may lead to a lower offer being made" (OFFA agreement, 2014-15). Commitment to Frank Buttle Quality Mark for care leavers. Centralised admissions system. "Worsening performance with regard to widening participation in recent years" (ibid., 2013; Blenkharn, 2012). ** Contextual approach is supported by internal evidence on the degree performance of applicants from "aspirational" schools/ colleges (bottom 40% attainment), who tend to outperform their similarly-qualified peers from higher achieving schools/colleges.

23 Appendix Three.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
University of Glasgow	Full basket of UCAS data is brought into consideration as part of a holistic process. Member of Glasgow Community Colleges Group, access and WP agreements with Clydebank college. SWAP member. Focus West Programme Member. Will consider LEAPS reports as part of entry process.
Imperial College London	Ad hoc use of contextual data.
King's College London	Contextual data only used for specific courses: "Extended Medicine Degree Programme" and "Enhanced Support Dentistry" can include a "catch-up year".
University of Leeds	Access to Leeds model (A2L). Applicants who have experienced educational or social disadvantage are identified (through a combination of school performance and geographic factors) and flagged to admissions tutors. Admission tutors are then able to contextualise the applicant's potential and consider making an "A2L offer" (see Chapter Six, below).
University of Liverpool	Contextual data used with caution. Flags and additional consideration for those who have spent any period of time in care and admissions tutors are allowed to vary offer terms based on individual circumstances. There is ongoing research into degree outcomes and postcode data, to establish basis upon which this contextual data point is indicative.
LSE	Contextual data considered from UCAS form. Continuing and increasing consultation from 2012 onwards. Holistic assessment. Educational background: (i) average GCSE performance of school and (ii) average A Level point score per A Level taken in 6th form/college attended by candidate. Social background: the personal statement and reference provide supplementary information: social, cultural and financial context of achievement.
University of Manchester	Four pieces of contextual information are used where available (drawn from UCAS form and publicly available datasets): (1) assessment of the postcode that is provided as the home address using the HEFCE POLAR 3 Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) data and ACORN information. (2) in care for longer than three months. (3) performance of school or college at GCSE. (4) performance of school or college at A Level.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
Newcastle University	Full basket of UCAS contextual data taken into consideration. Member of Realising Opportunities network of Russell Group universities. Executor of "PARTNERS" Programme (see Chapter Four). Use of contextual data includes lower offer (summer school), guaranteed offer scheme and tracking. Each offer determined on an individual basis.
University of Nottingham	Operate a "flexible admissions policy". Recognised disadvantages affecting achievement: (1) being from less advantaged area, or family environment (2) being from a school/college where high academic achievement is not the norm (3) day-to-day family or work responsibilities (4) being a care-leaver, refugee or from a travelling community. Use of UCAS form, postcode analysis, school performance and reference information. Standard offer (recognising potential), or adjusted offer (usually one grade below standard offer).
University of Oxford	Undergraduate admissions office disseminates contextual information to individual colleges. This information includes: (1) prior education school performance and GCSE and A Level. (2) residential postcode assessed using ACORN information - geo-demographic profiles, and POLAR 2 data which assess HE participation rate in postcode area. (3) care status (more than three months). Use of contextual flagging system. Contextual information does not result in automatic offer, or adjusted offer, but a strong recommendation for interview, if academic, and relevant admission test, standards are met.
Queen Mary, University of London	May consider educational and contextual background. The decision to use contextual data rests with individual academic schools. If used, a statement is required to explain the specific invocation of context.
Queen's University Belfast	Awareness of contextual information. Monitored by Admissions Policy Review Group.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
University of Sheffield	Contextual information considered in the overall candidate evaluation made by the admissions tutor. No discernible system of flagging and adjustment. Information considered includes: POLAR 2 - low participation areal data; residence in deprived neighbourhood (indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings); participation in University outreach programmes: ADOPT, Discover and SOAMS or completion of the institute of Lifelong Learning foundation programme. Care status (over three months) is considered; mature student status (21 and above); and any additional statements or evidence supplied by the school or referee in support of the application through the University's Disrupted Studies application form.
University of Southampton	UCAS contextual data considered and other "circumstantial factors". It is an evidence-based approach to inform judgment. Admission selectors have discretion to vary the weight they give to examination results, and other indicators of achievement. They are therefore allowed to vary the offer they make, provided that this is consistent with their fair access agreement..
University College London	Admissions tutors are invited to use the data on underperforming schools to assist them in the consideration of applications. Applicants from such backgrounds might be invited to interview or sent a selection questionnaire where they would not normally be. Offers are not adjusted systematically, but tutors may, however, adjust an offer where the circumstances of a particular individual merit it.
University of Warwick	Warwick University runs the AWARDS Scheme ("Access to Warwick Degrees"). This is a supplementary application that creates extra space for applicants to submit additional (contextual) information for consideration.
University of York	Encourages the use of UCAS widening participation data. York is a member of the Realising Opportunities collective. The university also runs its own "University of York Access Scheme" which creates a space to provide more circumstantial information as part of an application.

Table 2. Contextual information used by each Russell Group university

* particularly strong research-led strategic interventions

Using contextualised admissions has a social effect. One, different candidates are being seen. Two, the same candidates are being seen in a fairer, arguably more representative, light. The effect on the diversity of the student body is encouraging, and crucially, this diversity does not lead to a drop in institutional excellence (see Chapter Eight). To the contrary, research suggests that standards are maintained, and in some studies, **there is growing evidence that those who gain entry through contextualised admissions outperform their counterparts during their degree.**

The academic effects are measurable, and we will consider some of these below, but the effects of contextualised admissions go beyond this metric. There are subtle, multiplying and powerful consequences that might include, but are not limited to:

- the human effect of diversity;
- institutional reputation and image (public profile);
- skill and experience base;
- student/employee engagement; and
- belonging and solidarity.

There seems to be quiet recognition among recruiters of these qualities. But this has yet to convert into consistent, concerted action. When we think of "contextualising" what we do and how we do it, there is a critical need to think of the human fabric of the organisation. "Social mobility" thought in this fuller, more embedded way (see Chapter Five) is no longer a charitable or obligational gesture, but an actual device for improving an organisation.

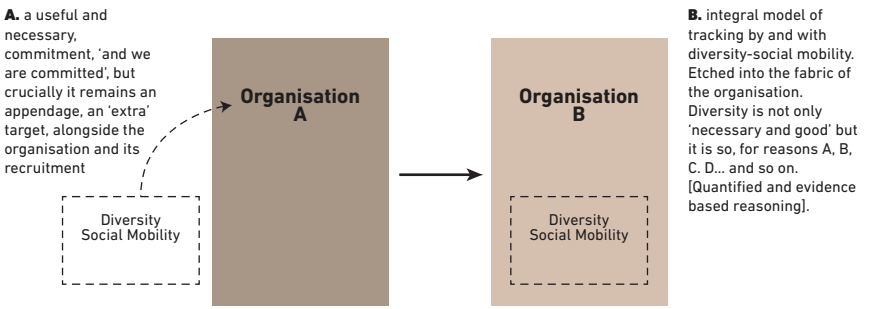


Plate 5. moving from appendage to integration.

With these thoughts in mind, we return to the university processes, looking here in particular depth at some of the most provoking, advanced and results-based "ways of being contextual".

SIX

IN FOCUS: OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Here we take a forensic look at various aspects of contextual admissions procedures at Oxford and Cambridge universities. The intention is to understand the translatable value in each mechanism, and the justification for its use.

University of Oxford, at a glance:

- 11,832 undergraduates (2012);
- One of the lowest drop-out rates in the UK: (HESA, 2012) - only 1.6% of Oxford students dropped out, compared with national average of 8.6%;
- 17,000 people apply for around 3,500 undergraduate spaces in 2012 (on average, 5 applications per place);
- Oxford conducts more than 24,000 interviews for over 11,000 applicants over the two-week interview period in December;
- Oxford, through outreach work, reaches 78% of UK schools with post-16 provision - virtually all schools that field candidates capable of making a competitive application to Oxford; and
- Oxford's flagship access programme is the UNIQ summer school. 192 of the 2012 UNIQ cohort went on to win an Oxford place (twice the success rate: 40% compared to 20% without).

The Undergraduate Admissions Office collates contextual information for all Oxford University applicants permanently domiciled or seeking asylum in the UK at the moment of application, and who have been educated in the UK secondary education system, using UCAS and publicly available data. These findings are then disseminated to colleges and departments. The process of undergraduate admission into Oxford is summarised in Plate 6.

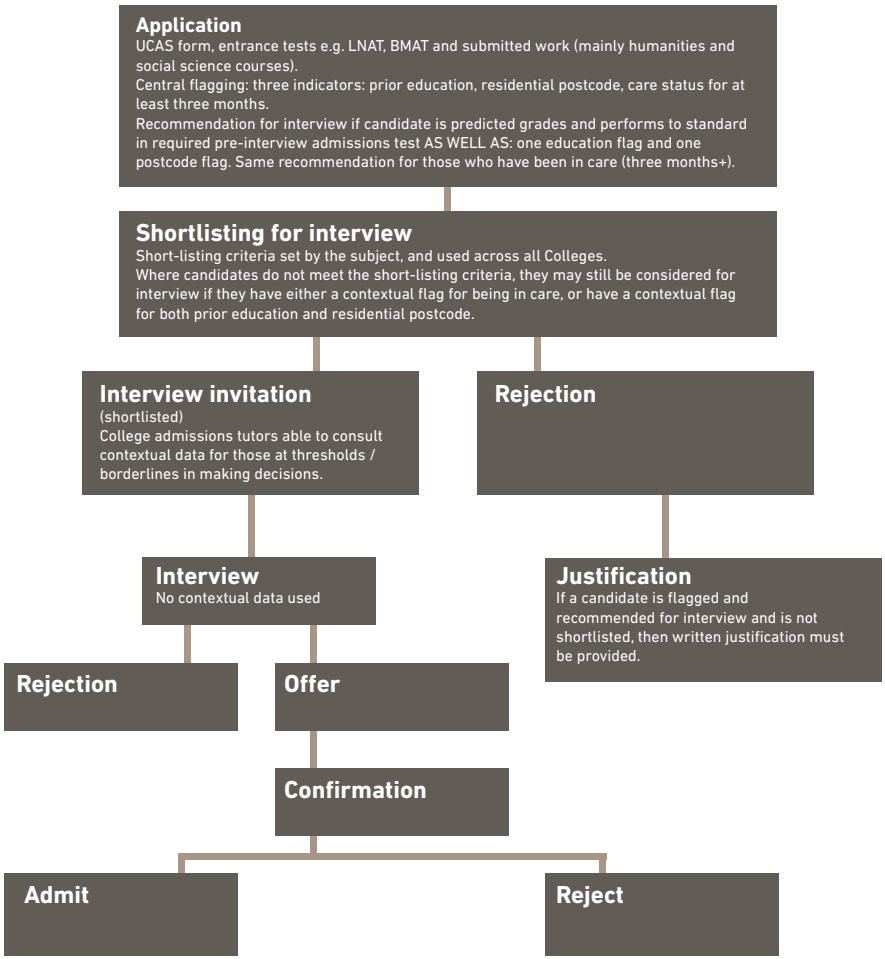


Plate 6. Blueprint of Oxford admissions process in terms of context as a strategic category. Authors' own interpretation.

Oxford uses three contextual categories in its evaluation of a prospective student: prior education, residential postcode and care status. Particular focus here is on the use of Department for Education, ACORN and POLAR2 datasets to create a contextual basket of data that is used to increase the amount and range of candidates being invited to the interview stages. The information is logged into the Oxford ADSS system, an example of which can be seen in Appendix Four.

Prior education information is determined by two inquiries:

A. the performance of the applicant's school or college at GCSE or equivalent level; and
B. the performance of the applicant's school or college at A Level or equivalent level.

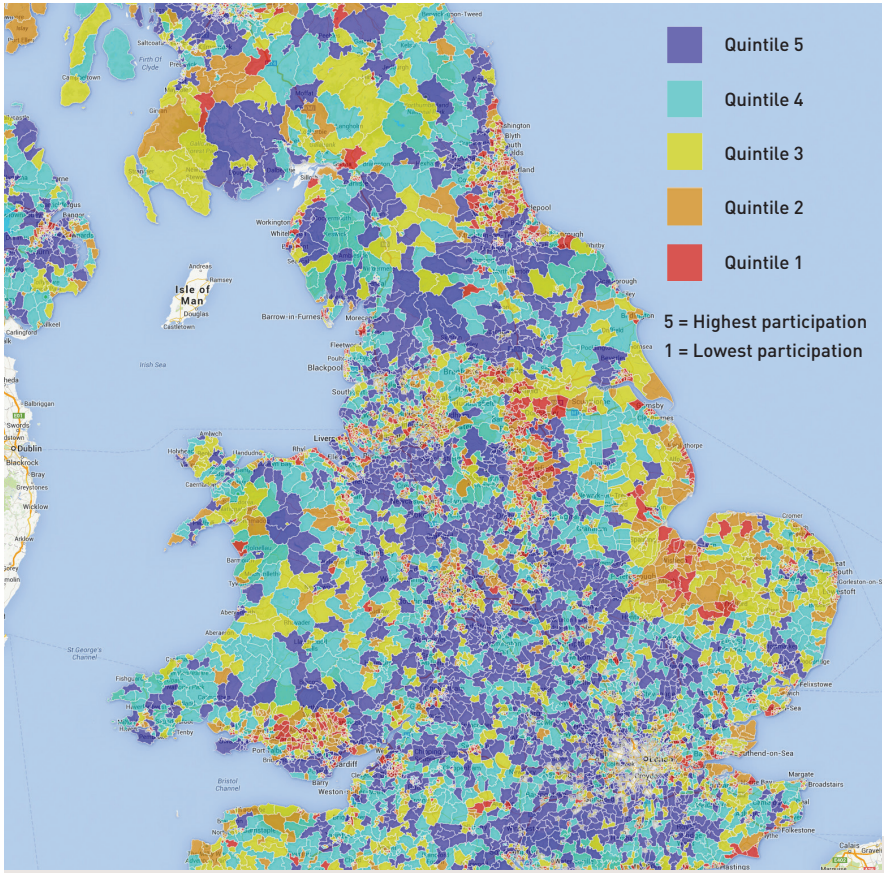
For both criteria, a candidate receives a flag if their establishment performs below the national average using the Department of Education or similar data.[24]

The second arm of contextualisation is residential postcode. Using the applicant's home address as supplied within the UCAS form, ACORN is used to establish the geodemographic profile of the associated area. It is a system broadly used across both private and public institutions. Where an applicant's postcode falls into ACORN groups four or five ("moderate means" and "hardest pressed" respectively) then the application will be flagged by the university (see Appendix Six).

The other element of postcode intervention concerns the use of POLAR2 data[25]. For Oxford university, the 2013/14 application season is the first time it will be used as a further indicator (it had been used previously in several other Russell Group universities). Once again, the applicant's postcode is matched against the dataset, that this time analyses it in terms of Higher Education participation rates. If applicants are in the lowest two quintiles then their application will be flagged (see Plate 7 for an example of the POLAR2 interface).

24 Candidates who apply from schools listed within 'Target 1' of Oxford University's Access Agreement will also receive a flag. These are schools with particularly low progression rates to Oxford, and small percentage achieving Oxford standard entry grades each year (<10%).

25 This information has recently been upgraded in a new POLAR3 system (2012), but UCAS still use POLAR2 because it allows analysis of long-term trends over the last decade; but this should be balanced by the idea of diminishing accuracy.



About the map

This map shows how young participation in higher education varies across the UK. For each 2001 census ward we have calculated the young participation rate.This rate is defined as the proportion of young people (15 year olds) who entered HE by the age of 19 during the 2005-06 and 2010-11 academic years. We have used these rates to assign wards into five groups: the POLAR3 'quintiles'.

We have shaded each quintile with different colours. Areas in red are those in quintile 1 (and have the lowest participation rates) while areas in dark blue are those in quintile 5 (and have the highest participation rates).

Plate 7. POLAR2 data choropleth map example (young participation rate in higher education).

The impact of this model on a sample of undergraduate applicants in 2008 and 2009 can be seen in Plate 8. Here, even without the sophistications that have since been implemented, especially with the introduction of POLAR2 data in 2013, the gross number of applicants seen improves, as does the number that are shortlisted for interview. Of course this does not account for the reasons of selection and the quality of the applicant, but it demonstrates that in attending to context, potentially more applicants are receiving the opportunity to interview, and that, by tracking these changes, institutions begin to build the evidence-base necessary to assess this mode of intervention.

Impact modelling and validation

We analysed 2008 entry data to see the predicted impact:

- 14,109 applicants; 411 (5.7%) would have been overall flagged
- 177 of the 411 (43.1%) had not been short-listed for interview

2009 entry applicants – what actually happened:

- 15,277 applicants; 510 (6.4%) were overall flagged
- 165 of the 510 (32.4%) had not been short-listed for interview

Ucas Cycle	Score	Deselect	Reject After Interview	Missed Offer	Placed	Withdrew	Grand Total
2009	4	7	9	1	5	0	22
	3	48	91	1	34	2	176
	2	34	38	4	7	3	86
	1	55	72	3	17	7	154
	Totals	144	210	9	63	12	438
	%	32.9%	47.9%	16.4%		2.7%	
2008	%	43.1%	37.2%	16.3%		3.4%	

Plate 8. Impact of contextualised adjustments[26].

During conversations with prominent figures in the university's admissions policy team, as well as those within individual colleges and tutors, it became clear that the Oxford system is careful, attentive and reflexive. Context is used moderately, and appropriately, in the act of bringing more suitable candidates to interview. By the university's own admission, the system is meant to be subtle and low impact. The human review of those just below cut-off marks, contextual data-points that the university uses, allows different applicants to receive particular scrutiny, in circumstances where they might not usually be seen. This action, something directly translatable to a graduate recruitment context, is not about intervention at the point of offer, but influencing the conditions by which an applicant might reach the interview (or subsequent) stages of an admissions process. In other words, it allows suitable candidates with potential to be given a chance to demonstrate their talents where otherwise they would have not made it: the talent pool is, as a consequence, a little wider.

26 www.policyreview.tv/document_stream.php?document_id=2106

University of Cambridge, contextualised admissions programme:
Cambridge employs contextual data-points in a different way to Oxford and, indeed, in a different way to many other Russell Group universities. Individual decisions based on each applicant's potential to flourish at the university take into account various details:

- Academic record - GCSE grades (or equivalent); and AS marks and grades (or equivalent); and A Level (or equivalent) marks/grades or predictions;
- Teacher reference (school/college);
- Personal Statement;
- Test results (e.g. specific admissions tests such as the LNAT);
- Submitted work, where requested;
- Performance at interview, if called to interview; and
- Appropriate / relevant contextual data.

All the elements of the UCAS basket of data are available to each college, and that data is imported on to CamSIS (the admissions system of the university). The data is, however, not visible on the screen, leaving it to the discretion of each college as to how it is actively used, or otherwise.

During the 2011/12 admissions round, the *Subject Moderation Spreadsheets* produced by the Cambridge Admission Office (CAO) (detailing the pool of informational data accumulated during application including grades, and UMS marks, for instance) were extended to include six contextual data flags. The spreadsheets now also provide a "preliminary ranking of applications based on the findings of the Multiple Regression Study (see below) undertaken by staff in the CAO Admissions & Data Services team under the direction of the Admissions Forum's Working Party on Admissions Research"[27].

On the spreadsheet, following the central processing by the admissions office, there are six flag columns, adjacent to the applicant's name. The flags fall among four categories:

Flag type 1: in care

Flag if an applicant has been in care for any duration (at any time in their lives).

Flag type 2: socio-economic background

A. Flag if an applicant's home postcode is in the bottom two POLAR3 categories.
B. Flag if an applicant's home postcode is in one of the Output Area Classification (OAC)[28] super-groups 1-5 or sub-groups 7a1, 6c2 and 4c1 (low Cambridge participation and low HE participation).

27 http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/admissions/handbook/section1/1_4.html [date last accessed, November 19, 2013].
28 OAC is a classification of small areas produced by the Office of National Statistics using census data. http://areaclassification.org.uk/ and www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/products/area-classifications/ns-area-classifications/index/index.html [date last accessed, November 25, 2013]. For reservations with geo-demography: footnote 22.

Flag type 3: school attainment

A. Flag if an applicant's current school/college has produced fewer than five successful Oxbridge applicants over the last five years.

B. Flag if an applicant's GCSE school is in the maintained sector and has a capped GCSE score of less than 40.

Flag type 4: Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF)

Flag if an applicant has indicated on the Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) that they are submitting an Extenuating Circumstances Form (ECF). Colleges then add a flag if a form is submitted and/or if information emerges that leads the College to treat the applicant as if they had completed the form.

The application of contextual data is, like in the Oxford example, in order to assist an applicant to reach the interview stage, and therefore features at the college-level shortlisting stage. Alongside the use of flagged characteristics, Cambridge provides extensive added information through various ranking systems. At Cambridge, there is particular focus on prior educational attainment, with the widespread, evidence-based, implication that "achievement is the greatest guide to potential" - Cambridge Admissions official (author's interview notes). This in mind, **Cambridge employs an algorithm** to all incoming students which sets their academic achievement (across their eight best GCSEs, and top three AS Levels) in the context of the educational environment in which it was achieved. Going further than most other institutions, **the algorithm provides a quantifiable points-score that allows educational attainment to be ranked.** We will here focus on this algorithmic element of the Cambridge process:

Assessing grades

Following research by the Admissions and Data Services team within the CAO, Cambridge University has been mathematically assessing GCSE and A Level scores since 2011[29]. The methodology for assessing GCSE grades (run against school performance) is detailed below:

The process begins by counting the raw number of A (notation: NA) and A* (notation: NA*) grades, ignoring all other grade classifications. A score of 1.0 is afforded for each A*, and a value "F" (between 0 and 1) is afforded to each A grade where F is dependent on the school/college average GCSE score (notation: "S").

To calculate S, Cambridge look at the average (capped) GCSE point score. Using Department of Education methodology from 2003, Cambridge calculates the average (capped) GCSE point score for every English school, using the most recent available GCSE cohort data. The point scoring system is simple:

29 The scoring system is for applicants educated in English schools, as there remain several difficulties in obtaining, and some scarcities within, information for schools outside England.

A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Where the attainment of 8A* grades would equate to 64 scored points. Only the best eight results are taken to count towards individual scores. The school/college average is then calculated by taking the average of the individual scores achieved by all students studying GCSEs.

According to the Cambridge metrics, the average point score commonly ranges from 20 (very poor) to the low sixties (generally speaking, we might classify scores in this way *cf.* Sutton Trust, "*Degrees of Success",* 2011):

- 60+ = high achieving, top independent and highly selective state schools
- 50-60 = good independent and selective state schools
- 40-50 = good comprehensive and other non-selective state schools (weaker independent schools too)
- 30-40 = average non-selective state schools
- below 30 = poor schools with few high achievers in each class.

Therefore, bringing both simple calculations together, we can rank an applicant's relative GCSE points score.

If $S \leq 20.0$ $F = 1$
If $20.0 < S \geq 40.0$ $F = 2 - 0.05 \times S$
If $S > 40.0$ $F = 0$

Represented graphically, the relationship between F and S is:

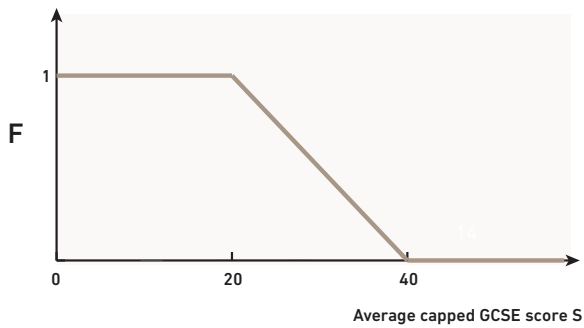


Plate 9. Graphic relation between dependent F and school GCSE score S
Source: Cambridge Admissions Site

Therefore, an applicant's calculated GCSE score, G is: $G = NA^* + F(NA)$.

By way of justification, it is argued that the simple score is a telling device as it is not based / stratified by the type of school (*e.g.* there are many state schools that score more highly than most independent schools). Moreover, it provides an indicator for the levels of academic support that are likely to have been afforded to the candidate: "a proxy that when used in the GCSE scoring formula detailed above has been shown to improve the correlation between this measure and Tripos (degree) performance" at the university.

Similarly, for A Level scores, the CAO uses lists supplied by the Department of Education since 2007, detailing average A Level point scores for each school/college, where points are assigned in this way:

A*	A	B	C	D	E
300	270	240	210	180	150

(and half of these scores for AS Levels).

The scores of individual applicants are aligned with two indicators based on this data: (A) the average point score per examination entry, and (B) the average point score per student. Both, and together, allow AS results to be assessed, and A Level predictions to be set in context.

UMS[30] Ranking

Alongside the flagged characteristics and the algorithmic work applied to GCSE and AS/A Level scores, the Subject Moderation Spreadsheets also include express rankings, and where possible, individualised and comparable, "Merit Scores".

As part of the application process, prospective students are expected to declare UMS scores for at least three AS Level subjects (their best three), with a total potential score of 600 (across the three)[31]. An average is then calculated across these three subjects (it is the prerogative of the student to declare four subjects if they wish to), with each subject providing equal weighting. Applicants will be ranked according to their AS/A2 performance in their best three subjects (or science subjects, as appropriate). All applicants who declared their best three / Science UMS values are subsequently banded in quintiles, labelled A-E. Those who cannot be ranked are grouped together at the bottom of spreadsheets (allocated to "quintile" Z, the outlier).

Each applicant with sufficient data available will also be given a Merit Score (see below) which will appear in an adjacent column to the AS/A2 UMS averages. In some subjects this will be based on UMS alone; in others, where the multiple regression study (above) has shown a positive

30 UMS refers to the A Level Uniform Mark Scheme. This scheme converts raw marks achieved under one exam board into a comparable form. It balances out differences between exams, and ensures that students receive the correct grade, regardless of the unit.

31 For the purposes of analysis, subjects with fewer than 200 'out of' points are excluded.

gain to correlations, GCSE results will contribute to the Merit Score. This constitutes a contextual counter-mechanism, leading to fairer comparison, and ranking, between students.

Merit Scores

In all subjects except Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, each applicant is placed into one of five groups ("Rank Group"):

1. **UMS:** Applicants with UMS for at least three subjects, with a total potential score of at least 600 across the three subjects;
2. **UMS and GCSE:** Applicants with UMS for at least three subjects, with a total potential score of at least 600 across the three subjects and at least 7 GCSEs (where GCSEs have shown positive gain)[32];
3. **S/UMS:** Applicants with UMS for at least three science subjects, with a total potential score of at least 600 across the three subjects;
4. **S/UMS and GCSE:** Applicants with UMS for at least three science subjects, with a total potential score of at least 600 across the three subjects and at least 7 GCSEs (where GCSEs have shown positive gain); or
5. **(blank):** All other applicants – i.e. those without sufficient UMS data to be placed in any of the above groups.

The ranking formula for each subject is based on the findings of the Multiple Regression Study, and is primarily based on UMS data. The Rank Group indicates which model is to be used to calculate a Merit Score. In subjects where GCSE performance is not found to add value to the regression model, all applicants with UMS data are placed in the UMS Rank Group, and assigned a Merit Score on that basis, regardless of whether they have GCSE data. Applicants without sufficient UMS data are not assigned a Merit Score and are, again, assigned to the Z group in the Quintile column.

What Merit Scores Mean

Merit Scores are displayed over three columns: Normalised Merit Score, Merit Range and Quintile.

- **Normalised Merit Score:** uses standard deviation to demonstrate the Merit Score achieved by the applicant, as a score roughly between –20 and 20. Two-thirds of applicants fall between –10 and 10. So, here, a score of zero would indicate a candidate who is placed right in the middle of the cohort.
- **Merit Range:** this is a prediction of the likely Part IA/PartI Tripos performance of the applicant, as a range of overall percentage. Based on the performance of previously admitted students, Cambridge research states that there is an expectation for a student with certain UMS/GCSE scores to attain a Part IA/PartI percentage within this range approximately two-thirds of the time.

32 Cambridge's internal admissions research has demonstrated that in some subjects, UMS and GCSE together provide a better fit to Tripos results than UMS alone: in these subjects, Merit Scores are based on UMS and GCSE data for the UMS+GCSE Rank Group, and then on UMS data only for applicants in the UMS Rank Group.

- **Quintile:** divides UMS averages into five equally sized groups, with A designating the top 20% of ranked applicants and E the bottom 20%. Unranked applicants will be placed in a Z group.

How and where this fits into the journey through application, can be seen in Plate 10.

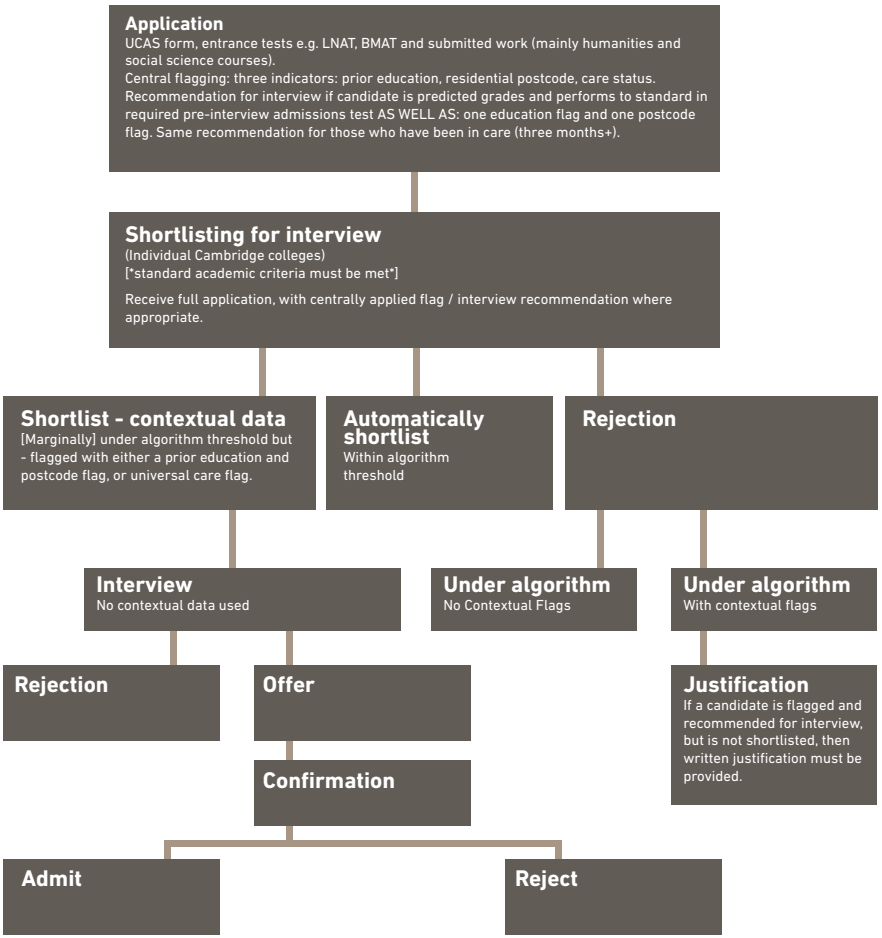


Plate 10. Blueprint of Cambridge admissions process in terms of context as a strategic category. Authors' own interpretation.

Despite Cambridge's ranking and algorithm analyses, the most significant assessment emphasis that Cambridge exerts is "flexibility and professional judgment" (interview notes). Cambridge is clear that it trains "selectors not just interviewers", emphasising the degree of conversation needed between the suggestive potential of contextual information and the subjective, and informed, judgment of college admissions tutors[33]. For instance, in cases where strong applicants lack elements of background reading (to study English Literature for example), to the extent where they are likely to fall behind with the pace of work demanded at the university, tutors might suggest the completion of a recommended crash-course reading list, or deferred entry, where they prescribe a set list of texts to be completed ahead of taking up the offer. Here, crucially, we see a human reflexivity that moves beyond the indicative use of contextual data-points, and reacts subjectively, and appropriately to the circumstance presented. This best expresses the way in which the Cambridge system works through context, in order to reach the best, in the most thorough and fair way. Statistical analyses and contextual data points are never allowed to run away from the informed, and subjective, human element. It is this coupling that Rare considers close to possible best practice, while making clear that each contextual system is institution- and sometimes even course- specific.

33 This includes appropriate training as interview situations can give rise to implicit or associational biases otherwise known as "unconscious biases - e.g. subtle, often in-built, forms of discrimination based on race, disability, sexual orientation or gender for instance. These are "[i]ntrospectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favourable or unfavourable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects [people, situations etc]' (Greenwood and Banaji, 1995).

SEVEN

BEYOND OXBRIDGE

Based, already, on the transience of contextual measures, and their time-space specific application, it is clear that the types of contextual data used vary between institutions. The concept of context as strategy is mobilised in a variety of combinations. We might broadly gather contextual data indicators into three categories (*cf. SPA, 2012):*

Community focused – those which focus on areal space, and aggregate data according to socio-economic or demographic participation trends. The use of POLAR and ACORN display information as it pertains to both these characteristics, presenting a deep, geo-demographic assessment.

School or College focused – this data incorporates performance at GCSE and A Levels, or, in Scotland, SCQF Level 5 and SCQF Level 6/7[34,] measured using either rate of achievement or average point scores. This data is also collected against indicators of relative disadvantage including the proportion of learners in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) at GCSE. School and college data is the most widely deployed contextual metric.

Individually focused – in other words data which identifies background factors that are particular to the individual. Measures include coming from a low income household or having been in the care of the local authority.

Thus when contextual data is requested, a system of flagging is usually associated with it. HEIs vary as to when flagging is deployed, and the influence or after-effect of a flag. Several reactions were found to result (see also, Bridger *et al.,* 2012*):*
Initial Sift - those who do not meet the standard academic entry requirement but would be considered, or given greater attention, as a result of contextual awareness.
Shortlisting - here context is used to identify applicants to invite for interview, often by affording further consideration at the point of shortlisting (e.g. Oxford*).*
Interview or other selection methods - awareness at this stage (in admissions tests etc) of the effect of background on preparedness and result (e.g. Leeds*).*
Offers - contextual information used to justify variation in the offer provided: offers at the bottom end of usual threshold (e.g. Edinburgh), to make an offer that differs from the standard offer *(*e.g. Leeds) or undercuts it *(*e.g. Bristol), or to make a standard offer to those with lower predicted grades than would usually attract one *(*e.g. Newcastle).
Confirmation - afford additional consideration to flagged or contextualised applicants whose

34 SCQF stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. See Appendix One for a table of equivalent values and conversions.

examination performance falls at the borderline of the proposed offer.
Rationale for rejection - a reflexive mechanism that encourages admissions tutors to provide reasons for the rejection of a recommended and contextually flagged applicant (e.g. Oxford and Cambridge).

We explore this matrix of contextual considerations and their after-effects, through five in-depth examinations of contextual programmes run by Russell Group universities (Table 2). Each description provides a blueprint for how such data might be deployed, as part of a broader institutional strategic plan and multi-sited admissions process.

University and Programme	Description
Realising Potential - University of Bristol	The University of Bristol takes into account the educational context in which academic achievements have been gained, "particularly if there is evidence that the applicant's current or most recently attended school or college performs below a defined threshold" (university website). Contextual offers are typically a grade lower than the standard offer (e.g. AAA ---> AAB). Educational context can only be taken into account where data is available. The data is taken from Department for Education and UCAS; though data is not available for all schools and colleges. Candidates are encouraged to ensure their referee highlights school-level underperformance if it does not appear on the list, and they believe it to be under the threshold. Data is reviewed and refreshed annually.
Access To Leeds (A2L) - Leeds University	A contextual admission route into the University established in 2003. Applicants who have experienced educational or social disadvantage are identified (through a combination of school performance and geographic factors) and flagged to admissions tutors. Admission tutors are then able to contextualise the applicant's potential and consider making an "A2L offer". Analysis says that an additional 200 students enter the university as a consequence of the adjustments ("Annex 1", 2010). There are two application routes: Route One: submission of additional information, to be considered alongside UCAS application; or Route Two: automatic flagging of UCAS applicants based on postcode (POLAR 2), and secondary school performance (at GCSE).

University and Programme	Description
	In order to be eligible for an A2L offer, through either route, applicants must satisfy two of the following: (a) First from immediate family to apply to HE; (b) Annual household income of or below £25,000; OR in receipt of full EMA during Y12 or Y13; OR in receipt of free school meals during GCSE studies; (c) Attend, or have attended, a school which achieved less than 45% 5A*-C at GCSE (inc. Maths and English); (d) Had no option but to attend a local university; (e) Had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic lives; (f) Be (or have been) in public care; and (g) Live in an area where there is low progression to higher education. Automatic flags pick up criteria (c) and (g). Route One application allows more data about the other criteria to become evident. Offer Making: The decision whether or not to make an offer is at the discretion of Admission Tutors. If deemed suitable, candidates receive two offers: an A2L offer and a standard offer. An A2L offer consists of a reduction in grade in two A Levels (40 UCAS tariff points) along with the successful completion of a ten credit Level 0 module (consisting of a study-skills component and an assignment for the academic course to be studied). Candidates are tracked during their time at university (attrition, and degree classification). Since 2003, 840 students have registered at the university through the programme, with an average continuation rate of 98.5% since 2008; and an average of 68% awarded a first-class or upper-second-class degree. Applications since 2003 have grown from 82 per annum to over 700 in 2010/11. The target for 2013/14 is 1,300 direct applications and 1,000 flagged students (through UCAS), with a target of 520 A2L students registering at Leeds per year (Leeds OFFA Agreement, 2013/14).

University and Programme	Description
AWARDS - Warwick University	Warwick AWARDS (Access to Warwick Degrees) was established to enable prospective students, through the completion of an additional "contextual" form, to provide the university with information to supplement the UCAS submission. It affords space for admissions tutors to consider declared familial, personal, social, and educational difficulties that a candidate may have faced during the course of their upbringing and educational life. It is an appendage to the UCAS form. An easily implemented programme that provides candidates who may have had unequal antecedent opportunities, or extra pressures, to be afforded additional consideration.
University of Manchester - **flagging**	Four pieces of contextual information are used where available (drawn from UCAS form and publicly available datasets) to decide whether to flag an application or otherwise: (1) assessment of the postcode that is provided as the home address using the HEFCE POLAR3 Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) data and ACORN information. (2) in care for longer than three months. (3) Performance of school or college at GCSE. (4) Performance of school or college at A Level. School performance data is calculated using a z-score algorithm that, using standard deviation, sets school achievement against the national average (see Appendix Five). CACI/ACORN provides the most granulated postcode analysis (10-15 households). If postcodes fall into either categories 4 or 5 (most deprived) or within LPN Wards (category 1) according to POLAR3, then the application will be flagged. ------- If an applicant receives a contextual flag and they meet the standard academic entry criteria, their application is recommended for further consideration.

University and Programme	Description
	The assignment of a flag does NOT lead, systematically, to a lower offer. Where standard entry thresholds already cover a range of different grades, admissions decision-makers will exercise the same judgment as they do with any other applicant when making offers. The nature of further consideration varies between different schools: • **Non-academic criteria:** acknowledgement of unequal access to participate in extracurricular activities or to gain specific work experience, or university guidance. • **Interview:** appreciation that applicant may be from a home and / or educational background where there may be less opportunity to access practice interviews, coaching, guidance and other preparation. • **Confirmation and clearing:** When the offer conditions are not met, admissions tutors may look closely at flagged applicants and consider these again at the point of confirmation. Flagged applicants may also be highlighted as potential students for whom internal clearing opportunities could be suitable. • **Aptitude tests, portfolio requirements etc:** Where additional tests or portfolios (Bones, 2012) are required, admissions decision-makers may apply additional or different processes for flagged applicants.
University of Edinburgh - **adjusted offers and points system**	Since 2004, the university has used contextual data to identify disadvantaged students during the admissions process. Offers are made within a range BBBB to AAAA - an offer made to a WP candidate may state conditions at the lower end of the grade range. Edinburgh University also uses a points-scoring system to rank applicants, where contextual data and academic attainment, among other factors, are used to produce a quantifiable figure. However, the university does not release the metrics and detail of the algorithm to the public. So further analysis, in this instance, is prevented.

Table 3. Contextual programmes in-focus.

In the context of graduate recruitment, the use of a points-scoring system - as referred to in the final section on Edinburgh University - presents a more risk-laden undertaking. Here the boundaries between contextual data as a supplementary strategic intervention, and as an active differentiator, become blurred. The use of scoring as a potential indicative device might be a way forward, as demonstrated in the Cambridge example, although such usage must be underpinned by a careful and transparent rationale. The deeper question, otherwise, is how you weigh the effect of a certain experience on an individual's life. **How many grade points is it ethically appropriate to attribute to someone who has had to care for a dependent parent, or who has been in the most poorly performing school? Quantifying experience in such a way is a flawed pursuit,** and it is not recommended here that such hardline metrics be used to quantify immeasurably qualitative, experiential, realities. One way beyond this impasse might be to take attainment averages from before a disruptive event, measure the percentage change in achievement, or measure against predicted performance (but again there are also wider factors - psychological, social etc - that are far harder, if not impossible to quantify).

Ultimately, this study finds that the way in which contextual data and wider contextual information are being used in admissions varies considerably in line with different institutional characters, missions and cultures; and is being informed by different drivers relating to these factors. The use of contextual data is seen most prominently, and effectively, in the most selecting institutions where it is implemented alongside a clear institution-specific rationale and evidence base (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge, Leeds, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Manchester). Their approaches clearly combine a coupled movement, where context is mobilised to both widen participation and achieve/maintain excellence.

In all examples, informed professional judgment was the underlying prerequisite of the admissions system, no matter to what extent there has been a take-up of additional metrics and contextual data. It therefore follows that we should not, at any stage of the recruitment process, secede informed judgment to the "reliance" and "indicative power" of statistical devices or contextual tools. Each tool, when deployed carefully, and reflexively, affords another space of consideration as part of a broader map of the prospective candidate. In short, context is not the panacea, but a useful heuristic device as part of a reflexive, informed and holistic process.

EIGHT

JUSTIFYING THE USE OF CONTEXT: THE EVIDENCE

The new UK HE funding policy has shifted concern from the inputs of widening participation activities within universities to establishing the evidence-base for their justification and outcomes. The studies here gathered provide strong empirical evidence that pipelining interventions are justified (based on identifying the effects of prior disadvantage) and effective, in that summer schools succeed in engaging those non-traditional students with high potential, and converting them into not only successful applicants, but successful students and graduates.

That being said, thinking on the effects of specific context-based strategic interventions sometimes suffers from a lack of long-term, rationale based, systematic research; and often that which does exist remains in-house and unpublished (Mountford-Zimdars and Graham, 2012), often preventing worthwhile sector-wide extrapolations. By considering specific research clusters built to understand the admissions process in universities, as well as the wider work that moves to understand the nature of transitions between school and university, this brief chapter reviews the evidence base behind current contextual admission policies.

The broad-base of research

According to existing research, socioeconomic differences in university progression are underlined by educational inequalities (e.g. SPA, 2012; Gorard, 2000). Educational imbalance is only one measure of accumulative disadvantage. Thinking back to our theoretical work on capital, we must also factor in that, even within the same advantaged or disadvantaged school, an individual's experience will be unique. Anecdotally we might think of whether an individual received a bursary to attend a particularly well-performing school, and within this how their experience might have been affected (the sociodemographic make-up of the school, its ethnic and racial diversity too, might have had psychological effects, through anxiety, pressure, or various forms of non-belonging for instance). While the research overview here focuses particularly on the metric of school and educational attainment (and its after-image in university results), recruiters must remain open to the broader, and often more subtle, ways disadvantage lodges itself unto individuals.

A study by the Sutton Trust published in December 2010 concluded that comprehensive pupils were likely to achieve higher degrees than independent and grammar school students with similar A Levels and GCSE results. Similarly a 2010 report from the London School of Economics' Centre for Economic Performance found state students were four per cent more likely to achieve a First or Upper Second class honours. As we will see below, a Bristol University study in the same year found three per cent more state school students were awarded First-class degrees than their independent

peers. This is supported, more broadly, by evidence from the HEFCE (2003) which showed that state school students were more likely to get a 2:1 or First-class degree.

Of particular importance is how this evidence feeds into the case for a contextual data approach. The fundamental argument is that the end-of-school attainment of individuals from under-represented groups, or those that have suffered various forms of hardship in their upbringing, will not be a faithful prediction of their potential degree attainment. Taking this into account does not amount to a dumbing down, but rather it is about connecting the pathways of entrance, to the conditions of attainment, and the potential to succeed.

We now turn towards examples of such research, that both look to understand (and measure) the varied effects of pre-university experience on an individual, with particular focus here on "schooling effects" and to analyse the evidence that currently exists through the monitoring of bespoke access programmes.

Antecedent (pre-university) effects

Work across the universities, government-led research, academic papers and anecdotal information all provide evidence that many applicants to HE (and, here, we will think more generally too i.e. graduate applications) experience some form of (educational) disadvantage (Van De Werfhorst, *et al.,* 2003; Archer *et al.*, 2003; Reay *et al.*, 2003). This disadvantage comes in multiple forms, affecting, as we might think, different levels of expressive capital. Some of these forms might include inadequate teaching, poor advice, familial circumstantial factors that reduce the study time available (e.g. caring for dependents, life in a single-parent family[35] too). The point is that collectively we understand that these antecedent factors can often result in levels of attainment that do not reflect an individual's potential to succeed.

There is significant literature, for instance, on the detrimental effects life in care can have on a young person (see in particular Jackson *et al.,* 2005; BIS, 2010). We might think here of informational deprivation, changes of residency before key exams, and uncertainty about accommodation during term time and vacations[36]. We also mentioned earlier the report by the

35 Employment rate for single-parent families: 57.3% (Lane, et al., 2011). Other known disadvantages to consider:
- Children of lone parents are more likely to live in poverty than children in a two parent family.
- In the UK, 20% of all children and 28% of children in lone parent families were in relative poverty in 2009/10. In fact, lone parent families are more than three-times more likely than couple-families to belong to the lowest income quintile (37% and 10%) respectively (Philo et al. 2009).
- A child of a lone parent that works part-time is almost three times less likely to be living in poverty than a child of a lone parent who is not working, and a child of a lone parent that works full-time is five times less likely to be living in poverty.

36 Research explores the relative disadvantages associated with care: http://www.buttleuk.org/pages/by-degrees-from-care-to-university.html [date last accessed, November 26, 2013]. It was estimated by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003 that only 1% of care leavers progressed to higher education (Jackson et al., 2005). Since then, more data has for the first time been collected, and the number of known care leavers aged 19 in full-time education in England was recorded as 260 in 2004 (5% of care leavers), 400 in 2008 (6%) and 420 in 2009 (7%) (BIS, 2010); in contrast with an HE participation rate of 45% for the UK population (ibid.). The numbers are increasing but they are still disproportionately low when comparing care leavers to children who have not gone through the care system (cf. Cardiff University 'Use and Rationale of Contextual Data').

Sutton Trust (2010) that identified imbalances in levels of loosely defined "social and cultural capital" leading to uninformed university choices being made, where high-potential candidates are not entering appropriately high-achieving universities, in contrast to those whose parents have been to university. Research by Jerrim (2013) with the Sutton Trust, found that children with professional parents were approximately three times more likely to enter a high status university than those with working class parents. Going further, the research found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to develop the advanced cognitive skills required to enter a high status university. Indeed, "less than three percent of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in England (…) reached a "high" standard (Level 5) on the PISA 2009 reading assessment"[37] (*ibid.* 2013: 2). This research tells us that latent intelligence or innate ability (degree potential) is not the only causal factor behind different levels of pre-university achievement. Achievement at school is influenced, strongly, by a wide range of personal, social, and institutional factors. To quote the University of Bristol:

> "Our analyses are geared to seek out (necessarily circumstantial) evidence for how well students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, admitted on the basis of widening participation criteria, perform at university" (Hoare and Johnston, 2011: 4).

Research at Bristol University by Tony Hoare identified so-called "equi-potential" groups, which allowed cross attainment comparison upon degree outcome. Using data for three years of entry, it found that widening participation students with entry grades of BBB+ performed, on exit, to the same level as non-widening participation students, with AAB+. But there are some elements of conflicting evidence: notably Partington's (2011) work on the Cambridge data, which shows no school-type effect (Table 4).

Summary of "schooling effects": university-led research

In 2005, the Higher Education Funding Council for England reported that:

> "Students from independent schools appear consistently to do less well than students from other schools and colleges, when compared on a like-for-like basis"

HEFCE (2003) had also previously concluded that for all but those students attending the most highly selective universities the size of the school type effect was equivalent to that which would be associated with one to four A Level points: 20-80 tariff points. Evidently, these results should be treated with caution, given the complexities associated with attainment, but at the very least they are suggestive. Similarly, a study of degree outcomes at the University of Oxford (Zimdars, 2007) found that students from independent schools did less well at the university than state-school pupils, after controlling for prior attainment. As is demonstrated in Table 4, there is a breadth of research that suggests a significant case for adjusting admissions, or introducing

37 OECD PISA assessment (2009) http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/44455820.pdf [date last accessed, November 21, 2013].

context into admissions. By monitoring this adjustment against the specifically defined criteria of "social mobility" a deeper evidence base will be built up, able to evaluate and judge the effects and the future of intervention.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
University of Manchester	As stated in their OFFA Agreement 2013, and their papers on the "rationale behind contextual data use": "Our most recent evidence shows that students from low performing schools achieve at least as well as other Manchester students when entering with the same academic performance. They have therefore displayed evidence of outstanding performance in relation to their peers that is exceptional among their peer group". Disadvantaged students tend to perform at least as well. Using the HESA data for the University, an extensive longitudinal analysis was undertaken on student background and degree performance. The following key points emerged: • When disadvantaged students entered Manchester with the same academic entry threshold, there was strong evidence they performed at least as well as students from more advantaged backgrounds, and in some cases better; • Justification for flagging. Processes for further/additional consideration of "flagged" students from disadvantaged backgrounds could then be agreed with no corresponding diminution of academic quality (closely monitored); and • Admittedly, when disadvantaged students entered Manchester with a lower academic entry threshold (e.g. 1 or 2 grades at A Level or equivalent) there was inconsistent evidence of them performing better than more advantaged students with higher academic performance. This, however, remains under review following continual evidence being produced by agencies such as the Centre for Widening Participation Research at Bristol University (above) and the Sutton Trust, as well as ongoing monitoring of Manchester data.

INSTITUTION	CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS
University of Oxford	The Oxford Admissions study (Zimdars, *et al.,* 2002). The research was based on connecting data from a questionnaire of applicants, to subsequent academic results (e.g. A Level), as well as the university attended, and subsequent degree attainment. Controlling for prior attainment, the study looked at whether students from certain backgrounds had a greater chance of gaining a place at Oxford, and achieving a First. The study found that state school applicants were more likely to gain a First than those applicants from independent schools with similar GCSEs.
University of Cambridge	(Partington, 2010) Examined the relationship between metrics at admission and the university examination percentages 2006-09. It found that among state-sector students from low-performing schools (POLAR2), GCSEs correlated with university examination performance more strongly than general (the correlation became stronger as school performance declined). It concluded that students with very good GCSE results from lower performing schools are likely to have the potential to do well (but it does not suggest making routine allowances, or adjustments, for weaker GCSE candidates).

Table 4. Institutional schooling-effects research.

The argument suggested here is that, if a university is to maintain excellence by recruiting the best applicants, it cannot simply rely on A Level results or their equivalents as shorthand for ability and potential. There is a need for achievements in context: contextual admissions. Again, this does not mean that institutions are moving away from academic rigour and high standards. It is about seeking excellence by enabling them to identify the "best applicants" with the greatest potential and likelihood of a successful degree outcome (e.g. SPA, 2012).

The state of play

Based on the above analysis, there is a clear need to develop this existing evidence-base and begin to understand the reasons for the some of the differences that have been outlined. Thinking more holistically, very few studies have longitudinally engaged with the transitions from school, through university and into graduate jobs. There remain research gaps as to the correlation between background, educational achievement, higher education outcomes and the potential to succeed in the most highly-selective graduate jobs.

Upon review, evidence-based findings from universities presented a range of outcomes. Some evidence to date says that educationally disadvantaged students do not perform any worse at undergraduate level than students from other backgrounds (HEFCE, 2003; HEFCE, 2005); and some studies go further, as with Bristol University, and find that such students outperform those who enter on higher grades (Hoare and Johnston, 2011). Edinburgh University, however, presented inconclusive findings from its pilot schemes between 2004 and 2006 (Croxford *et al.,* 2013a,b,c), as did Cambridge (see above). Clearly there are gaps, not only inside HEIs but within graduate recruitment too. It is not common for in-depth socio-demographic data to be recorded at present. Where it is being encouraged, it has only been a recent move. This research therefore calls for fresh efforts at recording, monitoring and reflection, so that in the coming years there is a tracked evidence base of information on organisational characteristics as they pertain to social mobility. It is hoped that such data might be connected with growing bodies of HE evidence, so as to begin to chart youth transitions through various institutions, systems and organisations.

NINE

PAPER AND PERSON

The previous three chapters have considered the university admissions process in some detail. Our focus now shifts toward the outcomes of our in-depth, qualitative interviews with some of Rare's candidates and alumni. Our intention is to understand how context is a lived category, and what that might mean for our analysis.

We look at how young people move through institutional transitions and what information about them is revealed through those transitions. By using interviews, the importance of a person's context (during the experiences of these changes) is interrogated. The intention is to explore how the use of contextual data can be applied to ensure that non-traditional candidates are found and then treated more thoroughly, fairly and effectively.

We are extremely grateful to the 23 Rare candidates and alumni who agreed to be interviewed for this study. They were all happy to be quoted on the record and to have parts of their life stories published here. After some reflection, we have nevertheless taken the decision to change their names and certain other details, since some of what they told us is quite personal in nature.

We have included transcripts of interviews below, where appropriate.

The interviews

In a similar map to that laid out in Chapter Five, this next section uses a range of data and information, that might be thought of as:

- **contextual data:** data garnered from sociodemographic statistics or educational background (the type used for statistical flagging in university applications);
- **contextual information:** in the absence of a personal statement or (teacher) reference, the background and circumstantial information gathered here emerges from the series of (psychosocial) interviews that were undertaken with the candidates; and
- **contextualisation:** where the applicant has participated in a form of outreach or pre-application activity that either produces a flag, singles out the applicant for contextual treatment (e.g. Newcastle, or Leeds universities), or represents the influence of a facilitator:

in this instance, the participation or association with Rare necessarily shapes our talent pool as people identified as having potential who, with Rare's help, will be able to transform that into graduate outcomes.

This diagram of information and data, alongside theoretical considerations and the work performed on context in the previous chapters, suggests that, outside of fully anonymised recruitment systems like the Civil Service Fast Stream's, qualitative and quantitative data should be considered collaboratively for a fairer evaluation of individuals.

These interviews began to demonstrate how carefully we must consider each application in context. Transitions from school and into higher education are heterodox. We, here, take the empirical work of the interviews and return to the Bourdieusian capital theory outlined in the Chapter Two. Understanding the social field of play as an uneven one (Bourdieu, 1985) it becomes clear that the transformative capacities of "good schools" or "great universities" are dependent upon other, broader, circumstantial situations. The work of Amartya Sen on education is deployed as a useful translator between the stories of the Rare candidates and the ideas of capital and context.

Candidates

Rare's work in *Class, Race and Graduate Recruitment (2011)* considers, in detail, the opinions of Rare candidates on various forms of assessment. Likewise, the position and thoughts of recruiters are also outlined. Here, the focus stays particularly with the interview and process of contextualisation itself. Using Rare candidates as a proxy, we interview and contextualise so as to gain a clearer understanding how context applies to potential, and where it might best be strategically interned.

The candidates and alumni are from a broad range of backgrounds; from those who had attended independent boarding schools, to others who had been in comprehensive schools for their GCSEs and A Levels, for instance. We here use four particularly elucidating case-studies, that of Rakesh, Cecilia, Wumi and Kofi[38], while bringing other findings into conversation to explore points on: education, transitions, interviews, contextual data, work experience and the idea of "constrained freedoms".

The field of play: education as contextual information

Opportunities

The stories that were uncovered in these encounters are situated in a field of play where not everybody is equally capacitated. Perhaps in its rawest sense, the transformative capabilities of education, or an individual's upbringing (influences, habits, exposures) are best considered in the context of this, Bourdieu's, "game" and "field" analogy. Bourdieu defines the world in which people

38 Wumi – ABBC - comprehensive school - Edinburgh University - Mixed White and Black African – Civil Service Fast Stream.
Kofi – AAB – comprehensive school - City University - Black African - Magic Circle law firm.
Rakesh – AAAA – grammar school - SOAS – Asian Indian - Magic Circle law firm.
Cecilia – ABB – comprehensive school - Nottingham University – Black African - Civil Service Fast Stream.

live as a "social space" in which people "play different games" (1985). The sphere of play is an ordered universe in which not everything can happen. The social space is a "partially autonomous field of forces, but also a field of struggle for positions within it" (Mahar *et al.,* 1990: 8-9). In this sense, education (school and university) provides a cultural capital (literal awareness: political, societal, historical), human capital (learning "how to be" and "how to come across") and social capital too (networks, and "connectedness": depending on the nature of your school, and your experiences there), which can increase the status and opportunities of a given individual within the field (Bourdieu 1990). Think here, again, of someone's *habitus* (Chapter Two), the expression of such capital.

> "My oldest brother has followed my dad's steps into music management but I didn't want to go that way at all. I like structure. And then no, so my oldest brother is in music management and my younger brother is a teacher and yeah if I look at my aunties and uncles they're either teachers, university lecturers or doctors. All kind of very traditional."

Wumi's words begin to express this multi-speed movement through the transition from school to university and beyond. In this brief excerpt, antecedent familial experiences of higher education, and certain types of jobs provide an exposure that, by her admission, (a) enabled more informed decision-making about careers and (b) provided professional connections to those careers if they are particularly relevant (an enabling dimension of social capital). But such clear distinctions are not always the case. What became evident were the subtle singularities to each individual's story, where they had been, their interests, ambitions, and influences. Clearly the theory can only take us so far: in fact, we might better approach capital theory as thinking device, something that opens consideration out to ways in which people grow up and become differently. The effects of these formative exposures vary:

> Wumi: I was head of the school council in my sixth form, because I was head girl so I was really involved and did that. And then sort of drama productions, sports and just sort of anything that was going on I wanted to get involved.
>
> Interviewer: Was there a lot going on in your school?
>
> Wumi: Yeah, quite a lot. I think if you wanted to get involved there were always things to do.

School(ing) might be thought to have instrumental effects beyond those realised by grade attainment: the ability to participate in school councils, organise people, run fundraising campaigns, lead sports teams, or pursue interests in the arts all emerged as ways in which schooling lodged intrinsic benefits into individuals too (confidence, organisation, ability to cope with the unexpected). It is these intrinsic benefits that might be gathered under the terms human and cultural capital.

Friends

> Wumi: I'm actually living with my best friend from school at the moment. So yeah, actually in touch with quite a lot of people from home because I moved back there and it's a small

place so you actually bump into a lot of people. But also a lot of people from the University of Edinburgh have moved to London so just a lot of them are here. So yeah I keep in touch.

Interviewer: Ah yes I see, so what are your friends up to?

Wumi: We're actually quite varied, I'm quite impressed by the range of work we've got. My flatmate works for Bloomsbury. The other one works for a charity called Working Families which advises on work-life balance and good working practices for companies. Um I have friends who are teachers, ones in marketing, ones in banks, friends in law firms. Just really like a broad picture.

School friends and their current destinations were explored here to see their indicative value in considering an individual's circumstance and sphere of influence. For Wumi, the durability of her school friendship bonds is perhaps expressive of the similarly directed life trajectories shared by Wumi and her friends; this wasn't often the case where some individuals over-achieved relative to their school cohort (e.g. Kofi). In the case of Rakesh and Kofi (below), for example, they referred to school friends as people who, in some instances, have failed to transform their potential, or have suffered misfortune or trapping circumstances. Rakesh mentioned that some of them took drugs, smoked and drank a lot. He also noted that, as he still lives with his parents (and therefore in the same area), he does keep in touch with them, as long as they do not do those particular things around him.

"It just made sense to live at home during university. I could do the short commute to lectures (…) and my family could afford it too".

His transition into university and, latterly, into a training contract with a law firm has not necessarily seen the sphere of influence around him change. His school and home-based friends remain close. Coming from an all-boys school with a significant number of Asian Indian and Asian Pakistani students, Rakesh still, upon reflection, thought he moved within the same social network. Given that most of his friends grew up in similar areas to him, he has also remained static geographically. This was generally also the case for other candidates who came from excellent schools (as rated by Ofsted and the A Level average points score). They tended to be more likely to go to similar institutions as their friends from school or perhaps even the same universities. For others, however, the transition was more definitive. For one interviewee, only one other person from his school was in Oxford and was not someone he was close to or saw regularly.

All things being fair, or not

Returning to Bourdieu's model, however, education has a direct value. This value can be converted, through opportunity, into outcomes such as economic gain. In this instance, education is shown to be instrumental in improving the "lot" of an individual. However, for conversion to occur, circumstantial processes such as employment opportunities or favourable social contexts must be present, (see "Bourdieu's Field" below). Given our work here, and in the Chapter Two we know that

the weight of context is different and often constraining for some, usually the most underprivileged. Bourdieu's model highlights these harsh realities. Socio-cultural contexts which are unfavourable for reasons including race, poverty and disability, can have consequences. And economic constraints can mean some opportunities remain out of reach (e.g. to move away from home, as with Rakesh). This example arose out of a consideration of education. Balance here might be found in the contextual assessment of school achievement, and as part of the qualitative encounter, this data was laid alongside the contextual information from the interviews. In Boxes 1-3, for instance, we see how understanding the way in which school had been attended, the circumstances of an individual's upbringing and the socio-cultural context of that school can be useful in accurately attuning to academic achievement.

Extracts from Ofsted's report on Rakesh's school:

"...Significant numbers of students join from the private sector. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals or who have learning difficulties or disabilities are well below average and none is looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students for whom English is a second language is higher than average. Standards are very high overall and especially so in mathematics. At GCSE over 60% of results in 2007 ire at grades A or A*."

The school was rated outstanding in 2007 and then again in 2012's interim assessment.

Box 1.

Extracts from ACORN through Postcode Data – based on Manor Park Station - the station for the area near which Rakesh grew up:

- *Category 5: Urban Diversity*
- *Group P: Struggling Estates*
- *Type 55: Deprived and Ethnically Diverse in Flats*

"..Around a quarter of people in this type may be of African or Caribbean descent and other ethnic backgrounds. .. These people tend to live in smaller flats, most rented from the council or housing association. These homes (are) the most overcrowded in the UK…

The working population tends to be employed in semi-skilled or routine jobs where the skill levels required are relatively low." (Source: Acorn.caci.co.uk)

Box 2.

Extracts from interview:

On Family
His parents are both shopkeepers. It is through being in the shop he managed to get professional work experience during school – a customer offered to take him for a week.

His brother studied medicine at Queen Mary.

No one in his family had been a lawyer, and only three people in his extended family he could think of had graduated with a bachelors. One had done psychology and was a cashier and the other had graduated with Politics from Nottingham Trent and works at the MoD.

On school and university
He said he school was 'pretty terrible' at helping him with advice and information for his application. He said a disproportionately high number of students were sent to study Medicine or Veterinary Sciences.

He was rejected from all of his university choices after his initial application for Economics. SOAS was the only university which made him an offer upon his second application. He did not enjoy his time there as most people had selected it because of its specialism.

He explained the Law Society was tiny and therefore it was very simple to be elected into a senior position. Together with his three closest friends (also Law at SOAS, all currently with contract offers from the same firm) ran the society.

He was Treasurer of the Hindu society because he was one of its founders – together with two of his closest friends.

Box 3.

When the information from interviews, and the contextualisation of both Rakesh's socio-demographic background (according to ACORN) and the relative rank of his school's attainment following Ofsted (in this example) are laid together, an image of Rakesh's actual attainment becomes clearer. He is the first generation of his immediate family to attend university, for instance. The work experience in small law firms that appeared elsewhere in Rakesh's applications to graduate recruiters is afforded a more accurate context when his transition to an internationally recognised university is understood. This example remains suggestive particularly of how school grades are only one measure of the "schooling effect". Clearly, given the analysis of universities, attainment is for HEIs, and for graduate recruiters, "the best guide to potential". It is then the job, however, of interviews and other assessment devices to (a) embed achievement in context and (b) understand other subtler influences that might contribute to someone's overall presence, or impression.

Bourdieu's field: education as contextual data

The specific context of the school is indicative, clearly, and it goes some way towards putting Rakesh's' achievements in light of their circumstances. Pausing here though, there is an extra movement we can make, that relates to the broader context in which these schools themselves sit. This context is particularly relevant to young people who belong to under-represented groups:

Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the youth unemployment rate for black men (aged 16-25), able to work, has increased from 28.8% to 55.9% since 2008, almost double the rate for young white men. Similarly, young black women are disproportionately more at risk than any other ethnic group, with a 39.1% unemployment rate. Such figures are suggestive of something more than a unilateral issue of race, as the term "social mobility" naturally implies (see Chapter Two). Indeed, in the UK there are currently 2.58 million people who are unemployed. Race alone is not the only reason behind black unemployment, but commentators, businesses, public officials and the wider population must be sensitive to the fact that particular hardships disproportionately affect certain people who belong to minority ethnic groups (see Chapter Two).

75% of black communities live in Britain's poorest localities[39]. Young black people that do attend university go to, on average, less prestigious institutions, study lower status subjects, are more likely to drop out, and are less likely to attain the highest qualifications; leaving black students over-represented in low status institutions (see Chapter Two). More broadly, "ethnic minority groups are more likely than the rest of the population to live in poor areas, be unemployed, have low incomes, live in poor housing, have poor health and be the victims of crime" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000: *para. 2.2*).

The field of play is characterised by its inequalities. It is these circumstances, at the scale of society, that we can see filtered down and expressed in the context of the interviews, or the contextual work we applied to various sources of data. It is in trying to capture this broad level of data, through such devices as ACORN, outlined previously, that we encounter a balancing act, doing justice to geodemographic contexts, the schooling effect, and personal experience; while also maintaining rigour and reflexivity. It is to the conversation between qualitative and quantitative assessment that we now turn.

Being careful with data: balancing the qualitative with the quantitative

Disguised as it is as competencies and data, we can sometimes forget that the written assessment is less real than the stories that inspired it. Indeed data can often give us the naive sense of accurate representation; that is why faith in geo-demographic areal averages must always be balanced by other sources of information, and, above all, informed, situated, subjective judgment. In an interview, and as a selector, this means being "aware of myself as both product and producer, object and subject" (Richardson, 1997: 2). Two things became evident from the interview process in terms of data and subjectivity: (a) the difficulty sometimes in establishing the validity of geodemographic

39 Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (2005). http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/457C99D8-9C07-4198-A9B2-12913B84D387/0/improving_the_prospects_of_people_living_in_areas_of_multiple_deprivation_in_England.pdf (date last accessed, November 27, 2013). See also: Phillips, D and Harrison, M (2003). Housing and black and minority ethnic communities: review of the evidence base. ODPM.

data, or rather, the difficulty in deploying this systematically and fairly; and (b) the influence of the interviewer as a subjectively present actant, that necessarily shapes the "information" that is revealed. Here we consider contextual data and contextual information in the case of Cecilia, an ABB Politics undergraduate at the University of Nottingham (boxes 4 - 6):

Extracts from the Ofsted reports and other information on Cecilia's school (where she did GCSEs) and sixth form college (where she did A Levels).

School:

"The attainment of students on entering the school is broadly around average although, because of the selective system, the school has a lower number than nationally from the highest ability range. The proportion of students eligible for free schools meals is average. Around 30% of the students receive extra support in class, which is above the national average. The majority of students are British white with a high proportion of white European students. The proportion of students from homes where English is an additional language is above average. ." (Source: Section 48 Report)

College:

"It has the 2nd highest number of A grades at A Level of all sixth form colleges in the country and has achieved the highest average point score per student in West London for five years running."

Last year it was ranked the 8th best college in the country.

Box 4.

Extracts from ACORN through Postcode Data – based on Cecilia's address:

- *Category 5: Urban Diversity*
- *Group P: Struggling Estates*
- *Type 53: Low income terraces*

"..incomes tend to be significantly below the national median with a high proportion claiming Job Seeker's Allowance and other benefits relating to disability and single-parents. Typically educated to GCSE or A Level these people are more likely to have junior administrative, semi- skilled or routine jobs...
...Financial activity is limited. Fewer people will have much savings. The majority do not have a credit card, or any form of insurance." (source: Acorn.caci.co.uk)

Box 5.

Extracts from interview:

On family
She landed in the UK on her fifth birthday without a word of English. Her family is Angolan.

Her father went to university in Angola. Her mother did not. They both work manual jobs. They could offer no real support in her university application.

She has moved house 'around 10 times' since arriving. She has lived in Council accommodation. She was clear she doesn't want to move anymore. She wants a job, a house, a family – stability.

She has two younger siblings born in England. She wants to be a role model – takes care of them a lot.

On education
In her first school she started a debating club and a newsletter of the ACS (African Caribbean Society). She said there was not much on, so she had to organize things.

Her second school was across the road from Harrow Boys School. She said she barely scraped in.

She decided to study Politics instead of Law when she realized her grades were not going to be good enough. She did not do as well as she wanted in A Level and GSCE. She was rejected from Bristol, LSE and UCL.

Box 6.

Combining these three sources of information, a robust picture emerges. What is worthy of note is the balancing, or natural equilibration, each source of information provides. The address Cecilia gave was a home address so the reliability of ACORN is naturally greater than in the case for Rakesh for instance. The deployment of data here, as with the universities, was as part of a framework that set out to measure (a) educational background (b) socioeconomic and sociodemographic background, and (c) through the interview, understand the experiential movements through this "background data". As a consequence of that, Cecilia's hardship and her arrival in England with no knowledge of the language very much affects the way we view her achievements. As the first person from her family to go to university in England, and as someone from a neighbourhood of unqualified manual workers, her achievement appears significant.

Often the absence of N-data sets and the large-scale avoidance of statistical analyses leads to the charge by observers that qualitative techniques of assessment / selection are "unscientific". Qualitative techniques work to explore the world in its found form. Generally speaking, they seek

to answer questions that stress how social experience is given meaning, which is crucial when we remind ourselves once more of how different life experiences can be. Interviews are human interactions: the interviewer is not a disembodied, neutral and detached observer. Here we consider this interview dynamic, through the words of Kofi, a trainee lawyer at a Magic Circle law firm:

> Kofi: But the bit that I found hard is just making it personal to you. So if you're answering something like I like this firm because they've got ...erm... several international offices, why is that personally significant to you? So for example I would say that, because I was born here but my parents are from Ghana so I've always had a confusion of cultures so that's always given me a different perspective of life and so it's been one of the more enjoyable aspects life and how my work reflects that is quite interesting. So the first bit is generic, but the last bit is personal and that maybe sets it apart. And it certainly helps when you go into your interview to explain why you like something, because I'm just being honest. It's better than I like this because –puts on funny serious voice - "The way the market is changing is um moving here and moving there, the firm is perfectly positioned to take advantage of that(!)".
> (…)
> Interviewer: Yes, And the places where you didn't get in – at which stage was that?
>
> Kofi: Usually the [CV and cover letter] application stage. I tended to struggle with them ... not because my cover letters were bad, but when it was just CV and cover letter then I didn't get anywhere.
> (…)

Kofi's ability at interview, and relative lack of success at CV and cover letter type assessments might be thought to demonstrate the necessity of a coupled, and ranging process. It also suggests the subtle forms of influence and "good" impression that can come across at the stage of personal contact. Ensuring that the assessment at this stage is balanced, alongside the transparent assessment of the "paper" profiles, ensures that individuals are given the fairest chance to express themselves, even if they are disadvantaged by circumstance. Seeing the interview situation in this embedded way has many consequences for the way in which we think of it in practice:

(1) the interview is a performance: we must be aware of the ways in which certain disadvantages or experiences or exposures might express themselves as one individual being "more capable" than the other (e.g. shaking hands, holding eye contact and how these might vary according to various aspects of cultural upbringing).

(2) unconscious bias[40]**:** generally, the interview process is one that begins with the biographically situated, physically embodied interviewer / selector (who is shaped and influenced in ongoing ways by class, race, age, gender, ability, and sexuality). Here, the interviewer uses themselves as an "assessment instrument" - collecting data / information; as well as filtering, feeling, experiencing and analysing the experience of the encounter.

40 see footnote 33.

Unlike the tests of rigour and validity familiar to quantitative approaches, because the qualitative interviewer interacts directly and significantly with the people under assessment, the interviewer must be made to evaluate their own situatedness (in a way that was done here through the interview notes, and mid-interview reflection). This also means attending to the partiality of the encounter itself (DeLyser, 2010). Training to appreciate and attend to these unconscious and embodied forms of interaction so as to maintain the "fully-informed" judgment of assessors, is therefore important.

(3) "context": informed judgment was here seen to benefit from the inclusion of contextual data after the interview, in order to evaluate the encounter. It contributes to an understanding that realities are experienced differently. The interviews aimed at in-depth understanding of those experiences; seeking to shed light on how people make sense of the world as they perceive it, while acknowledging our own immersion in that world. The contextual data was applied consciously afterwards in our research, so as not to prefigure the encounter, and what we expected.

Increasingly, "the immersed and situated viewpoints from the thick of things are now seen as better vantage points that some imagined Archimedean overlook" (DeLyser *et al.,* 2010). It connects particularly with the experiences of the Oxford and Cambridge admissions systems in the training and practice of "selectors" not just interviewers. The emphasis on "selection" stresses the holistic nature of the assessment. The gathering together of data and information, as well as the reflexive treatment of the interviewer, and the checks and balances performed by the system (e.g. the written justification needed for a candidate who has been flagged and then rejected before interview), emphasised this.

Statistics on their own are often deemed too reductionist, but this is balanced clearly by the fact that statistics allow for the aggregation of data and the extrapolation of comparison. In our own examination of individuals, combining several sources of information, the categories of "data" and how critical testing might lean towards particular forms of representation became critical for how we assess candidates. As in the examples above, connecting what the paper says (grades, attainment, extra-curricular activities), with what the data says (educational, upbringing and extenuating circumstances), alongside the information gathered from interview produces a richer picture. This picture allows for different pathways to achievement, and, importantly, the idea of potential: the idea that attainment so far does not necessarily represent what is to come.

Transformations through Higher Education

Kofi: No, ironically, I applied to do a law degree so everyone was like "Ah, you didn't want to be a lawyer but you did a law degree!" But when I came out of college I was just like I want to study a good degree and I thought that you could do a lot with a law degree, people respect it. And I know now that if I'd wanted to be a lawyer I might have chosen a different subject, and done the GDL.

(…)

> I never thought about law. Because I was always good at sport so I thought this might take off.
> (…)
> Yeah, I had advice from my school, because I, like, we were talking about I wanted to do something with sports. If not playing sport I wanted to do something with sport, so at the time I thought about doing a sport studies degree. So I talked to one of my senior teachers and he was like, no that would be a waste for you.

Kofi's choices in choosing university, based on the resources, and knowledge he had might appear haphazard. It is the method through which young people make decisions about their futures that often highlights the inequalities both in opportunity, and also in advice. These relative advantages and disadvantages can be accumulative. The value of education intrinsically (value in itself) and instrumentally (as a means to an end), therefore, affect "social mobility" in different ways. For Amartya Sen, inequality is "ultimately a matter of capability deprivation". Affording schooling, and university, an unquestioned transformative power, however, is to neglect how differently they are both experienced (Levinson, 1996; Swain, 2011). In many instances, education has failed to open-up expanded employment and other substantive freedoms for young people across the country (Jeffrey *et al.,* 2008). Ultimately, the role of education, whether intrinsically or instrumentally, depends on context. Context socially, politically, temporally, and then beyond context, the notion of scale must also be considered; from inter-familial up to national. In each context and at each scale, both "being socially mobile / capable" and "education" mean different things. Crucially, the type and form of education varies (see Chapter Two) and that is witnessed in many of the forms of expression that the interview is attentive to.

> Kofi: Yeah I live in London, so my first and last year I was at home and my second year I lived out. Yeah it was pretty good. I guess it's probably the best year of my life. Everything happened in that year, so like I got my job, I got really close with some of my best friends now. Probably going through life one of them would probably be my best man, one of them would be the godfather of my kids. We're really close. And I guess I grew so much as a person and did so much stuff, so yeah it was a really big year for me I think.

As perhaps alluded to in Kofi's brief account above, education does have the potential to transform or improve quality of life for an individual, which is significant for the widening participation drives of OFFA and the universities, as well as for graduate recruiters in the way they analyse prospective candidates. However this disparate education has accumulative effects, as seen in the range of institutions a few interviewees thought they could apply to, or in research by the Sutton Trust on university application. More broadly, in a study of the instrumental capacity of education with men of Indian origin by Tarlo (1996), what it was to be educated was evidenced by reference to clothing, mannerisms, speech, and humour amongst other determinants. Indeed, educated men argued that their own "educated-ness" had become part of their "*uthna baithna*": a phrase that literally means a "manner of getting up and sitting down" (Jeffrey *et al.,* 2008).

Kofi: I grew up with a lot of people who were kind of in similar situations and so at school there were a lot of us that were in a clique. Three of us or three of four of us are doing something useful, a lot of the others are in jail. And it's not because they're dumb or stupid, some of them are academically gifted: it's just that they got involved in some of the wrong stuff.

The differential movement of Kofi vis-à-vis his home friends is evident, even if only in this brief revelation. Such empirical work, as well as the literature and antecedent studies this research has touched upon, when put into conversation with the work of Sen and Bourdieu, shows that capability can often be constrained by circumstance. There is therefore a need to appreciate the complexity of the "social field" (Bourdieu). Heterogeneity, whether through social and political landscapes or through family tradition, for example, renders "catch all" generic social mobility solutions inapplicable. The interview and the use of context must be attentive to these multiple stories, deciding what it is that it hopes to achieve. As we have seen above, transitions are best considered within the specific trajectory (or so-called "life narrative") of each candidate. With Rakesh, for example, areas, schools and school friends remained central. Thus a focus should be given not only to which university a candidate attended, but also how they attended that university – from home, with school friends, away from home, or whilst working, for example.

Wumi: After the internship you could apply for a coaching programme where they had all these sessions where they talked me through what they were looking for. I mean the website does give some information but it was so good to have someone talk you through it.
(…)
I actually did a summer internship. It's like the Summer Diversity internship that the Fast Stream run and applied because I was just getting towards the end of my third year, and I was doing four years at uni, and I had no idea what I wanted to do.
(…)
I kind of thought that's what a lot of civil servants were like. Like suited. Men. And I just really liked that they were doing a diversity programme. Because in my head that was like, quite a positive move.
(…)
But I had a friend who works for the Civil Service, and I just asked him to read my application and he was like just giving me advice. He came back saying – "Oh, they're looking for the star technique" and sort of told me all about it. And it was the first time I'd heard anything like that.

My career service at uni were quite good at like giving you mock interviews and stuff.

It is bad, because you don't want to feel like you have an advantage just because you know someone at the same time you want to know as much as you possibly can. And

> I do think they make an effort to get information out there and in terms of when I applied for the internship they did send me a pack explaining what to expect from the interview and telling me about competency based questions. Which was amazing really because at that stage I knew very little.

Wumi's experiences are elucidating when thinking though capital. Her relative advantage compared with Rakesh or Kofi, for instance, in gaining work experience, or at a more fundamental level - knowing of its existence and how to best get there - is striking. The transformative capability of such knowledge must be appreciated, and this appreciation must inform analysis that seeks to contextualise not only the presence or absence of work experience, but how it came about, and how it might have led to the accumulation of certain (dis)advantages.

Constrained freedoms and the context of doing: a conclusion

Implicit or explicit in the majority of both the empirical and conceptual literatures is a sense that social mobility is connected with autonomy, the realisation of potential and, ultimately, "freedom" (see Chapter Two). Freedom generally is understood as an individual's causal agency (Zizek, 2002). Mobility is often seen to be related to two forms of freedom (analytically distinct): positive and negative (Sager, 2006). The negative view focuses on the absence of restraints that one person may exercise over another, or the state may exercise over individuals (linked to choice and rights). Alternatively, positive freedom, "is not freedom from, but rather freedom to" (idem. 468); it is the "functionings" or capabilities that a person might have (Sen, 1992) to be able to carry out their will. We have seen here that within such a framework, an individual's scope for action is defined by the resources they hold vis-à-vis the opportunities and constraints given in the contextual conditions for action. For Sen, inequalities, biases, social exclusions or relative disadvantage are "a matter of capability deprivation" (Dreze and Sen, 2002: 36). Potential mobility is highly contingent across space-time and through the lives of various people and groups. Being able to move, express potential and achieve is actually a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship. The implication is that with adequate social opportunities, or adjustments, individuals can more effectively express their potential.

Overall, the qualitative explorations that this chapter has considered demonstrates the variety of experience. It shows the various speeds and movements with which individuals move through school and university; and the various skills, experiences, and opportunities that they might take advantage of or accumulate; as well as those that they miss out on by virtue of their circumstances to date. The ideas of constrained freedom in unequal fields of play set the scene for the careful use of qualitative and quantitative sources of information, both to account for certain inequalities that might jeopardise an application, and to give selectors a more informed appraisal of each candidate individually.

TEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, we draw some conclusions from our study of contextual admissions to universities, and make a series of recommendations to businesses about how they might better recruit.

The fundamental lesson is this: because of social and educational inequality – because, in our terms, not everyone is born or grows up with the same amount of capital – applying exactly the same standards to everyone regardless of context will result in missing talent. Who we see as "the best" is actually under-representative of the potential best.

It is clear that contextual data, used as part of a holistic admissions process and together with sound professional judgment, allows all applicants to be considered equally. It provides a more level playing field for candidates, regardless of background factors over which they may have no control. More than this, the use of contextual data can also be an effective tool in identifying those applicants with the greatest potential to succeed. It is in these ways that the current effective use of contextual data in universities can be transferred to the graduate recruitment context.

To give themselves the greatest chance of finding the very best from as many backgrounds and talent pools as possible, organisations should make some subtle adjustments.

> "(S)tudents from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be overlooked where contextual data is being used as a tool to assist in recruiting those applicants with the greatest potential to get the best outcomes from higher education in a context in which there is a pool of highly qualified applicants. This is particularly the case for highly selecting institutions. The use of contextual data can therefore be regarded as a key element of an admissions process which sets out to be fair and which strives for academic excellence."
>
> --- SPA, 2012.

What does this mean in practical terms?

Overall, for us, context means different candidates being seen, that is, specifically brought to interview. Contextualised recruitment is not a back-door entry point, but a nuanced, fair adjustment to account for inequality of prior opportunity and multiple (often subtle) forms of relative disadvantage.

Additionally, we conclude that where contextual data is being used as part of a recruitment or admissions process, the organisation in question should retain the flexibility to allow for professional judgment and assessment of individuals.

Research-based evidence from the universities is nascent, but it does appear that talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be missed in the admissions process where contextual data is being used as a tool. The application of contextual data is therefore considered a crucial element of a fair admissions process that does not compromise in its search for academic excellence, and we believe the same will hold true for graduate recruitment.

The research suggests that context should be used as an indicative device, and as a form of monitoring.

The following **general principles for the use of contextual data** apply to universities and, we believe, can be applied to graduate recruitment too:

(i) The use of contextual data must be:

- research-based and justifiable to ensure the use of data adds value to the process;
- valid, reliable and relevant to its purpose;
- used to improve the scope of recruitment, by recognising potential, through evidence based judgment (e.g. the same treatment to all is not necessarily fair); and
- transparent (clear detail on how and when it will be used).

(ii) Recruitment staff using contextual data in decision-making should be aware of the issues surrounding its use.

(ii) Regular monitoring of the use of the data, its aims, outputs and rationale should be an integral part of the recruitment process.

(iv) Applicants identified as needing additional support (or advice) during their application should receive appropriate attention post-recruitment, to ensure their potential continues to be developed once they make the transition into the organisation.

(v) Whilst there may be shared principles in the use of contextual data, we recognise that individual organisations are autonomous in the contextual data that they might use and how it might be used within their recruitment decision-making process.

On outreach

As seen in the university analysis, contextual data can be used in many different ways, including: to inform outreach activities (where to go, who to look for), to inform who to interview (above), and to identify an applicant who may need additional support through the application process,

for instance. How the mechanics of recruitment work must be coupled with where and how organisations look to attract talent, in order to realise significant change in the type of applicant they are encountering.

On communication

Contextual mechanisms within recruitment processes should, following the university example, go together with transparency, clarity and a tailor-built language to communicate them.

Good quality communication, we suggest, helps ensure that those from less advantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed at the organisation (or institution in the case of the HE sample) have the confidence to apply.

In some cases, the sometimes haphazard and tentative use of contextual data has been confusing and encouraged negative understandings of its value in popular media, and in the minds of parents, students and secondary school teachers.

The language to justify the data must be clear as to its use. It should be informed clearly, perhaps using the metrics of Bourdeusian capital as outlined in this report. This provides a robust and evidence-based framework for implementation.

On data, research and monitoring

Few studies have longitudinally engaged with the transitions from school, through university and into graduate jobs. There remain research gaps as to the correlation between background, educational achievement, higher education outcomes and the potential to succeed in the most highly selective graduate jobs. A start, on an organisational level, is to carry out a self-assessment, looking at what data is available, and what trends are, or seem to be, apparent. Any responses to social mobility, or context, must sit within, or be involved in creating, an informed research-base, sculpted around specific organisational needs.

Evidence drawn from the comprehensive Higher Education research conducted by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions team, suggests that "where contextual data is applied in admissions on the basis of robust research and using appropriate methodology it can contribute positively to a fair and inclusive admissions process" (2012: vii).

On recruitment

Contextual recruitment provides a simultaneous widening participation and good practice effort: a robust, more detailed and fairer additional tool to recruitment.

Our research suggests that context offers an effective strategy to engage a wider pool of talented individuals, more accurately evaluated, as part of a holistic recruitment process. At the same time, research suggests the need for caution, reflexivity, and monitoring. Each contextual

recruitment programme must be built around the specific industry and organisational needs. There is no blanket formula.

The research suggests that, for recruitment processes which include the evaluation of CVs, application forms, and cover letters, analysis should be contextual. Even for those processes that are anonymous and seemingly "CV blind", there is a need that specific forms of information be recorded, at the very least, for best practice and to begin engaging with an evidence base for future interventions.

Rare recommends:

(a) That firms sign up to the Rare Contextual Recruitment Pledge and collect a selection of the following data on context/capital:

Flag 1: economic (home address postcode, working while at university, eligible for free school meals);
Flag 2: educational (GCSE, A Level performance in context);
Flag 3: personal (serious illness, being a carer/parent, refugee/asylum status); and
Flag 4: a period of longer than three months spent in care.

(b) That firms should pay individual attention to anyone with two or more of the above flags, and always consider their application personally and in context before rejecting, alongside online tests, CV, cover letter or application form performance. Specifically, we urge firms to consider interviewing candidates from these backgrounds who meet their grade requirements and narrowly fail to meet a benchmark on – say – an online test.

(c) That recruiters ask not just about work experience but also about how candidates got it – possibly with a drop down box listing options including through friends, through family, in response to an advert, following a speculative application. Doing this adds some context to a candidate's achievements e.g, the week in the hedge fund looks less impressive if the fund belongs to a relative, whereas the fortnight in a TV production company looks more impressive if it is the result of writing a cold letter to someone.

(d) That firms begin to use, in recruitment, an algorithm to quantify academic achievements against context (specifically we suggest the use of a point score similar to that used by Cambridge University, so that firms can easily place applicants' GCSE and A Level performance in context).[41]

(e) The establishment of a working group of interested firms to establish exactly how we report on this data, to create a cross-industry standard, and in the future, the opportunity for meaningful internal tracking and reporting in terms of recruitment and retention, in the same way that firms report on gender and race.

41 Department of Education: http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/schools/performance/group.pl?qtype=NAT&superview=p16 and Bristol University, for example: http://www.bris.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014/applying/contextual-offer-schools-2014.pdf

Signing up to the Rare Contextual Recruitment Pledge means agreeing to collect data on the following flags

Flag 1:

A candidate is flagged if:

his or her home address is in the bottom two ACORN groups[42]; and/or

he or she is working more than 15 hours a week in term time while at university[43]; and/or

he or she was eligible for Free School Meals[44].

Flag 2

A candidate is flagged if:

his or her school is in the bottom 40% of schools as defined by their GCSE / A Level average performance[45].

Flag 3

A candidate is flagged if:

he or she suffered serious illness, or severely detrimental circumstances[46], during GCSEs or A Levels or university, and/or

he or she is the first generation of their immediate family to go to university, and/or

he or she is a carer or parent, and/or

he or she has refugee or asylum seeker status[47].

Flag 4

A candidate is flagged if:

he or she has spent a period longer than three months in care[48].

42 Where an applicant's postcode falls into ACORN groups four or five ('moderate means' and 'hardest pressed' respectively) then the application will be flagged (see Appendix Six).

43 This metric attunes to forms of disadvantage not necessarily evident at the school-age analysis. It is an addition that engages with disadvantage as it might be suffered or accumulate during university. HEFCE (2005): evidence suggests that (a) term-time work has a disadvantageous effect on degree outcomes and (b) that term-time work disproportionately effects low-income families (and especially, according to some studies, those whose fathers do not have university education and female students (particularly from ethnic minorities) Metcalf, 2003).

44 Eligible at the point that they sat their GCSEs: see footnote 6.

45 As defined by their performance by the Department of Education http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/schools/performance/group.pl?qtype=NAT&superview=p16 [date last accessed, November 25 2013]. Attainment (thereby assessing output) is a better indicator than state school vs. private school (there are bad private schools and brilliant state), measuring results as a handle on output allows the terms of our assessment to be consistent, and more attentive to actual experience.

46 Usually declared as part of an 'Extenuating Circumstances Form' or contextual description section in an application. These forms are typically used (alongside a teacher/tutor reference) for applicants who have experienced particular personal trauma or social, education and/or personal disadvantage e.g. significant study disruption (health, personal problems, disability [as well as special needs (including dyslexia or another specific learning difficulty) or other medical conditions**] or difficulties with schooling). In universities, the ECF might also take into account low participation from the applicants school, or there being little or no tradition of HE entry within the applicants family.

** Disabilities, special needs and other medical conditions are currently self-declared as part of the UCAS application [HEIs receive this information with an application].

47 Refugees are up to six times more likely to be unemployed than non-refugees; and often suffer a wealth of barriers to employment see http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/91-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-the-uk.pdf [accessed, November 26, 2013].

48 Self-declared at the point of application, relating to life between 0-16 years and 16+ (both eligible). Local authority: includes public care, and one or more of - foster care, semi-independent living, or residential care homes. For information on the experiences associated with time in care see p54 footnote 36. For definitions of 'care leavers', 'in care' and 'looked after status' see Appendix Seven.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Joshua Oware is Rare's Research and Community Affairs Co-ordinator. A geography student, he gained the highest First in his year at Oxford University, graduating as the "Gibbs Scholar", and is currently reading for a Masters in Sociology at the University of Cambridge.

A Rare candidate since his second year, he was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Civic Award in 2013 for positive contributions to University, local and national civic life and has since been elected as a Fellow to the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA). In October 2013 he won the London Schools and the Black Child (LSBC) academic achievement award, run by the office of Diane Abbott, MP.

While at Oxford, Josh Chaired the Council for Racial Awareness and Equality (CRAE), served as the Vice-President of the African-Caribbean Society, wrote features for the Runnymede Trust and worked as a fundraiser for the international school, UWC Adriatic, based in Italy. In addition, he coordinated the University's Black History Month programme in 2012, launched the first Race Equality Question Time Event with Trevor Phillips OBE, and organised a university Variety Show, headlined by MOBO award-winner, Akala.

Raphael Mokades founded Rare in 2005, on his own, with no previous recruitment experience, no candidates, no clients, and a desk in someone else's office. He has been the company's Managing Director ever since. Rare now works with about thirty of the world's best companies. Rare has over 4,000 candidates on its books, and employs seventeen people.

Prior to starting Rare, Raphael was in charge of diversity at Pearson, the international media company which owns the FT. Pearson won two Race for Opportunity awards during this time.

Raphael has a First class degree from Oxford University. He represented Oxford at basketball, served as his College's JCR President, and organised the biggest ball Oxford has ever seen.

Raphael is a non-executive Director of Hubbub, the local online food delivery service.

Raphael has written on business, sport and social issues for the Guardian, Times and Financial Times. He has co-authored five previous Rare research reports: *Recruiting Arabic-Speaking Graduates* (2009); *High Achieving Black Students: A Portrait* (2009);*What Top Ethnic Minority Students Want* (2010); *Class, Race and Recruitment: Best Practices* (2011); and *Five Years On* (2012). He also is the author of *Three Steps to Success* (2011), published by Profile Books.

Mirela Ivanova is a second year History student at Wadham College, Oxford, and worked as Rare's Research and Communications intern during the summer of 2013. Born in Bulgaria, she arrived in England aged 12. In her time at Oxford so far, she has been elected as the student Divisional Representative for the Humanities Board representing over 4000 students at governance level, and one of the Oxford University Student Union NUS Delegates. She is also the Deputy Comment Editor for The Oxford Student, Vice President of Oxford Women in Politics and on the standing committee for the History Society. In her first year she was awarded an Exam Prize for excellent performance in her preliminary examinations and an Undergraduate Scholarship Award for excellent academic work throughout the year from her college. She is also her college student union's Academic and Careers Officer and regularly contributes to the Oxford Culture Review.

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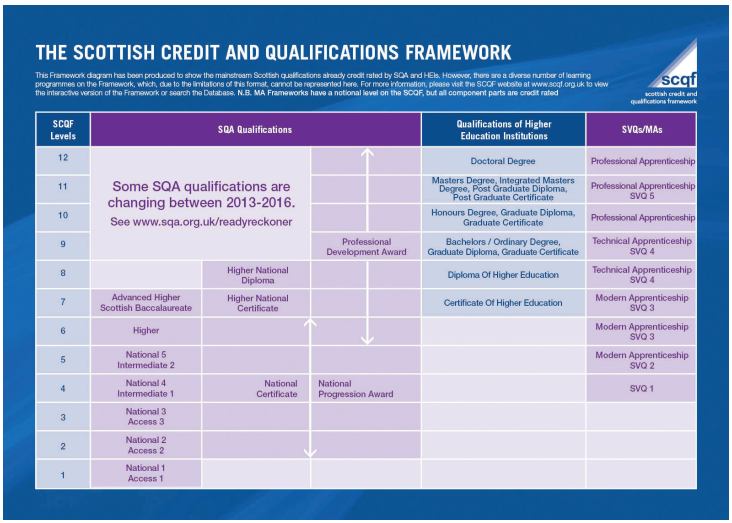
APPENDICES

ONE

Attainment equivalencies in the SCQF educational framework.

Source: http://www.scqf.org.uk/content/images/misc/Framework%20Diagram%20blue%20-%20Updated%20Aug%202013.jpg (date last accessed, November 15, 2013)



TWO

SPA

The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established in 2006 following the "Admissions to Higher Education" Steering Group report *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for good practice"* (known popularly as the "Schwartz Report", 2004). The independent programme monitors and encourages good, fair and effective practice in higher education. In 2012, the SPA published a landmark study assessing the use of contextual information in universities across 17 institutions with over 113 staff members. This work, used as an important mouthpiece in this area of our research feeds into a national level movement by the SPA to work with HEIs, UCAS, and other key stakeholders to develop

bespoke practices and monitoring frameworks for the use of context in HE admissions, particularly as it relates to the Government's Widening Participation agenda. An interesting current focus is on the mobilisation and use of verified data from public sources (*e.g.* government departments and UCAS).

OFFA

The Higher Education Act 2004 created the role of Director of Fair Access, who has responsibility for promoting and safeguarding fair access to higher education. The HEA specifically provides that he/she has a duty to protect academic freedom including, in particular, the freedom of institutions "to determine the criteria for the admission of students and apply those criteria in particular cases".

OFFA has no jurisdiction (or intention) to require institutions to use contextual data in the admissions process but the current government and OFFA do support the use of contextual data as a means of achieving the objective of widening participation and sustaining/improving access to higher education.

THREE

Basket of contextual data and information available for HEIs via UCAS

Data in **bold red** is new for 2013.

Basket of contextual data, available via UCAS 2013 entry	
Educational Background	**Socio-Economic Background**
• School performance average of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSE including English or Welsh and mathematics or equivalent in England, Wales and Northern Ireland • Scottish Standard grade/SCQF level 4 or equivalent in Scotland	• Percentage of students entitled to free school meals (for Scotland % registered) **by School** (historical data only by Local Authority)
• School performance average QCDA point score* for best 8 GCSEs in England, and Wales • Scottish Standard grade/SCQF 4 equivalent in Scotland	• Percentage of students entitled to EMA by school (not England and UCAS informed 16-19 bursary information not available by school in England)

Basket of contextual data, available via UCAS 2013 entry	
Educational Background	**Socio-Economic Background**
• School performance average QCDA point score* per A Level entry (or equivalent) in England, and Wales • UCAS tariff point score per Scottish Highers entry in Scotland	• Lives in a low progression to higher education neighbourhood (POLAR 2) – linked to applicant's postcode
• School performance average QCDA point score* per A Level student (or equivalent) in England, and Wales • Average UCAS Tariff points for Scottish Highers per student in Scotland	

*QCDA points = Since 2006, all approved level 3 qualifications have been reported in the DfE school performance tables using the former Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) point scoring system. The average point score per student is calculated as the sum of the QCDA points awarded to each 16 to 18 year old student, divided by the total number of 16 to 18 year old students at the end of study towards general and applied A/AS or equivalent level 3 qualifications.

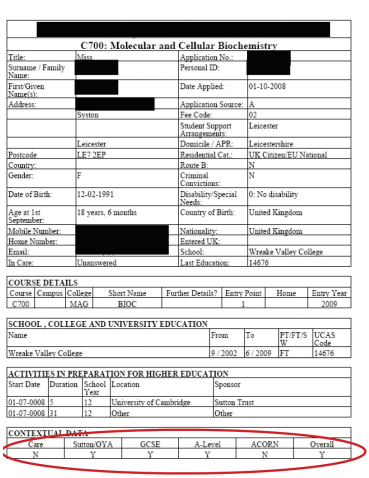
Points to note: UCAS currently does not provide:

- **Progression to Higher Education** data for Scotland. UCAS is working with the Scottish Government to examine if this data is available in the future.
- **Progression from year 11 to further education** data none of the UK education departments can provide this, so it is not being included at this stage.
- **Socio-economic class:** currently derived from self declared occupational background information collected by UCAS in UCAS Apply About 20-30% do not declare the data. This data is not provided to HEIs at the time of application, but only received after the institution has made a decision on the application and again after the end of the application cycle.
- **In care for greater than 6 months.** However the data on in care for 3 months and over is collected by UCAS through self-declared data in UCAS Apply.

- Any **indices of multiple deprivation or local area measures** that are used in different parts of the UK. (The Scottish index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and Welsh Communities First data will be available from 2014).

FOUR

Oxford's ADSS contextual recruitment system.



[redacted]

C700: Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry

Title:	Miss	Application No.:	[redacted]
Surname / Family Name:	[redacted]	Personal ID:	[redacted]
First/Given Name(s):	[redacted]	Date Applied:	01-10-2008
Address:	[redacted]	Application Source:	A
	System	Fee Code:	02
		Student Support Arrangement:	Leicester
	Leicester	Domicile / APR:	Leicestershire
Postcode	LE7 2EP	Residential Cat.:	UK Citizen/EU National
Country:		Route B:	N
Gender:	F	Criminal Convictions:	N
Date of Birth:	12-02-1991	Disability/Special Needs:	0: No disability
Age at 1st September:	18 years, 6 months	Country of Birth:	United Kingdom
Mobile Number:	[redacted]	Nationality:	United Kingdom
Home Number:		Entered UK:	
Email:	[redacted]	School:	Wreake Valley College
In Care:	Unanswered	Last Education:	14676

COURSE DETAILS

Course	Campus	College	Short Name	Further Details?	Entry Point	Home	Entry Year
C700		MAG	BIOC		1		2009

SCHOOL , COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Name	From	To	PT/FT/SW	UCAS Code
Wreake Valley College	9 / 2002	6 / 2009	FT	14676

ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Start Date	Duration	School Year	Location	Sponsor
01-07-0008	5	12	University of Cambridge	Sutton Trust
01-07-0008	31	12	Other	Other

CONTEXTUAL DATA

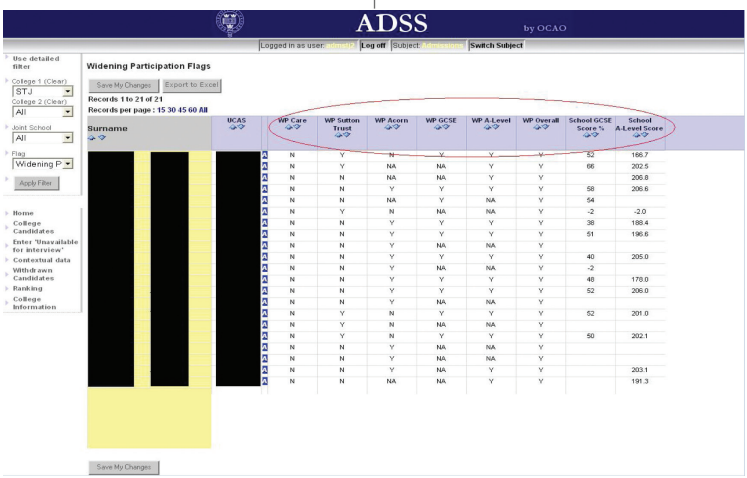
Care	Sutton/OYA	GCSE	A-Level	ACORN	Overall
N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

QUALIFICATIONS COMPLETED OR CERTIFIED

Date	Body	Level/Qual	Subject	Grade	Result	Centre
8/2007	OCR	GCSE	Design & Technology: Graphic Products	A		25172
8/2007	Edexcel	GCSE	English Literature	A		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Mathematics B	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Geography A	A*		25172
8/2007	Edexcel	GCSE	English A	A*		25172
8/2007	OCR	GCSE	French	A		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	History B	B		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Humanities	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSEDA	Science	A*A*		25172
8/2007	WJEC	GCSESC	Religious Studies A	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSESC	Information & Communication Technology A	A*		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Physics :- Title: 2821 Grade: A Title: 2822 Grade: A Title: 2823	A		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Chemistry :- Title: 2811 Grade: A Title: 2812 Grade: A Title: 2813 Grade: A	A		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Biology :- Title: 2801 Grade: A Title: 2802 Grade: A Title: 2803/A Grade: B	A		25172
6/2008	Edexcel	A Sub (AS)	Geography B :- Title: 6471 Grade: C Title: 6472 Title: 6473 Grade: A	A		25172
6/2008	AQA	A Sub (AS)	Mathematics :- Title: MPC1 Grade: A Title: MPC2 Grade: A Title: SS1B Grade: A	A		25172

QUALIFICATIONS NOT YET COMPLETED OR CERTIFIED

Date	Body	Level/Qual	Subject	Predicted Grade	Centre
				A	
6/2009	AQA	A	Mathematics	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Chemistry	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Physics	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Biology	A	25172



ADSS by OCAO

Logged in as user: [redacted] | Log off | Subject: Admissions | Switch Subject

Use detailed filter

College 1 (Clear): ST J

College 2 (Clear): All

Joint School: All

Flag: Widening P

Apply Filter

Home
College Candidates
Enter 'Unavailable for interview'
Contextual data Withdrawn Candidates
Ranking
College Information

Widening Participation Flags

Save My Changes | Export to Excel

Records 1 to 21 of 21

Records per page : 15 30 45 60 All

Surname	UCAS	WP Care	WP Sutton Trust	WP Acorn	WP GCSE	WP A Level	WP Overall	School GCSE Score %	School A-Level Score
[redacted]	[redacted]	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	52	166.7
		N	Y	NA	NA	Y	Y	66	202.5
		N	N	NA	NA	Y	Y		206.8
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	58	206.6
		N	N	NA	Y	NA	Y	54	
		N	Y	N	NA	NA	Y	-2	-2.0
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	38	188.4
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	51	196.6
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	40	205.0
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y	-2	
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	48	178.0
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	52	206.0
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	52	201.0
		N	Y	N	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	50	202.1
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	NA	Y	Y		203.1
		N	N	NA	NA	Y	Y		191.3

Save My Changes

FIVE

Manchester University, "methodology behind the contextual data indicators". Stratification by GCSE, and data source. http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DociD=8131 (date last accessed, November 18, 2013).

Indicator 3: Educational - Average School Performance at Level 2 (GCSE or equivalent).

Country	Data Source	Data
England	Department for Education (DfE)	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Mathematics compared to the national average for England.
Wales	Welsh Assembly Government - StatsWales	Percentage of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics compared to the national average for Wales.
Scotland	Scottish Government - Education Information and Analytical Services Division	Percentage of S4 year group achieving five or more awards at SCQF level 5 compared to the national average for Scotland.
Northern Ireland	Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI)	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Mathematics compared to the national average for Northern Ireland.

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Contextual Data - Education Indicators for the 2014 admissions cycle

Schools are listed in alphabetical order.
Level 2: GCSE or equivalent level qualifications
Level 3: A Level or equivalent level qualifications

Notes:

1. A 'WP Flag' (Widening Participation Flag) is produced if you meet the geo-demographic indicator or if you have been in care for more than three months. An additional contextual flag, a 'WP Plus Flag', is produced if you also meet at least one of the education indicators.
2. The education indicators are based on the combination of three years' of school performance data, where available, and combined using z-score methodology. For further information on this please follow the link below.
3. 'Yes' in the Level 2 or Level 3 column means that a candidate from this school, studying at this level, does meet an education indicator.
4. 'No' in both columns means that a candidate from this school does not meet an education indicator.
5. 'N/A' indicates that there is no reliable data available for that particular level of study.
6. Where both levels of study are reported as N/A, the school has not been included in this list. For a list of schools with no available data, please email contextualdata@manchester.ac.uk.

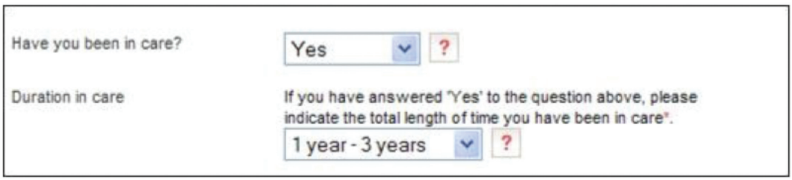
For further information please refer to our website: www.manchester.ac.uk/contextualdata

School Name	DCSF School Code	UCAS School Code	Post Code	School Level 2 Education Indicator	School Level 3 Education Indicator
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	5420059	14099	BT34 2QN	No	No
Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School	5420059	16448	BT34 2QN	No	No
Abbey College, Ramsey	8734603	11214	PE26 1DG	No	Yes
Abbey Grange Church of England Academy	3835400	13487	LS16 5EA	No	No
Abbey Hill School and Performing Arts College	8617007	18317	ST2 8LG	Yes	N/A
Abbey Hill School and Technology College	8087029	18187	TS19 8BU	Yes	N/A

SIX

ACORN category classification (four and five). http://downloads.postcodeanywhere.co.uk/pdf/acorn_user_guide.pdf (date last accessed, November 18, 2013).

SEVEN
Care status



Screen-shot from UCAS self-declaration form. It is also made clear to the applicant that by declaring care status, they are not signaled out or separated from their peers at university. The universities explain that the declaration / information enables them to ensure that the appropriate support frameworks are in place upon their arrival.

For institutions in England, this field must be completed for all Home/EU undergraduate and PGCE students. For institutions in Scotland, this field must be completed for UK domiciled undergraduate students. For institutions in Wales, this field must be completed for undergraduate students that enter through UCAS.

Definitions of a care leaver
OFFA have defined the circumstances of being in care as being where "...a local authority / Health and Social Care Trust has obligations to provide for, or share, the care of a child or young person under 16 years of age where parent(s) or guardian(s) for whatever reason are prevented from providing them with a suitable accommodation or care. A child is "looked after" if he or she is provided with accommodation or if they are subject to certain provision imposed by the system."

HESA denote the following:
01 Care leaver (16+) (England only): includes all students who can be reasonably verified as having being in care on or after their 16th birthday.
02 Looked after in Scotland (Scotland only): includes all students who can be reasonably verified as currently being looked after by a local authority or having been looked after by a local authority between the ages of 0 -18. To be "looked after" means either:

> Provided with accommodation by a local authority (for example, in foster care, kinship care, a residential school, secure unit or children's home, either on a voluntary basis or by means of a legal process, normally a supervision requirement made by a children's hearing in Scotland; or Subject of a supervision requirement made by a children's hearing in Scotland while living in the family home.

03 In care in the rest of UK (Scotland only): includes anyone who has spent any time up to the age of 18 in the care of a local authority in England or Wales or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland.
04 UCAS defined care leaver (England, Scotland and Wales): self-declared as in care for 3 months or more.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

Five Years On
December 2012

Five Years On is a study of top ethnic minority graduates in the first five years of their careers. The report uses data analysis, focus groups and one-on-one interviews to paint a picture of what it takes to create race equality at work – both in terms of what organisations and individuals can do.

Class, Race and Graduate Recruitment: Best Practices
December 2011

An ambitious research project into the success of candidates from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. The research looks at different stages of the recruitment process and combines qualitative and quantitative data to produce a list of recommendations to ensure fairness throughout the entire process.

What Top Ethnic Minority Students Want
December 2010

Unique research into the factors influencing the career choices made by high-achieving young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. This research – a corollary of 'High Achieving Black Students' – leverages information gathered by Rare's proprietary 'What Makes You Tick?' questionnaire.

High Achieving Black Students: A Portrait
December 2009

A rare examination of the lives of elite black students and the factors contributing to their academic success. A series of in-depth candidate interviews lead to recommendations for companies to better understand and connect with this demographic on career-related issues.

Recruiting Arabic Speaking Graduates
January 2009

Rare's first independent research piece. This research looks at native and non-native Arabic-speaking students and how best companies can develop and support these students as they enter the world of work.

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