Oxbridge admissions and knowledge as capital: understanding undergraduate admissions inequality through field

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Abstract

Securing the opportunity to study at the University of Oxford remains a culturally and professionally significant symbol, opening up opportunities and facilitating social advancement. Able students from a range of backgrounds and schools compete for undergraduate admission through a highly demanding decentralised process, crowned by the idiosyncratic tutorial interview. Unsurprisingly, the socioeconomic inequality of student success in this process remains a topic of regular, and at times heated, debate with little consensus on the reasons for this inequality. Yet a widely held assumption across the spectrum of opinion is the belief that the interview is a diagnostic test, with the tutors assessing an intelligence which is emergent and/or at the apex of what is studied in school. This study, premised on the belief that intelligence and hierarchies of knowledge are far more fluid and problematic concepts, seeks to identify the hitherto undervalued epistemological factor in admissions inequality. Using History as a case-study, it identifies the dissonance between historical knowledge and thinking in the school context and more disciplinary-linked university admissions context. Students, informed by the former, can best bridge this lack of epistemological through access to specialisms and networks most available for the socioeconomically privileged, contributing to the well-publicised inequality. This study mapped the gap in understandings of the models of intelligence of students from a range of school types and individuals involved in admissions at the University of Oxford. From this an intervention for the student group was designed, appropriating a form of Socratic dialogue, to close the identified gap. The study was forced to end prematurely due to COVID-19, meaning the results and conclusions are limited. However, it finds a clear gap in epistemological hierarchies between students and individuals involved in admissions and presents a model of a potential intervention which will inform further practitioner research.

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Introduction

1.1 Context

Undergraduate admission to the University of Oxford remains a highly valued educational and professional badge, retaining an esteemed place among the public (BritainThinks, 2018), applicants (Velasco, 2012), and graduates (Brown et al., 2016). Its alumni dominate the professions (Obukhova, 2019), politics (Davis, 2010), media, and top finance firms (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014). This reflects the common perception that those who succeed in the university's competitive admissions process are among the best of their cohort (Keep & James, 2010). This competitiveness is stark with between 2015-2017 six highly-achieving students competed for every place (The University of Oxford, 2018a).

Despite common frameworks and some limited training, the university's admission process remains unbureaucratic (The University of Oxford, 2018b) and decentralised to the university's colleges (Zimdars, 2016). Students are assessed using a combination of personal statements, references, pre-interview assessments, past and predicted academic performance, contextual data, and the tutorial interview. However, admissions tutors themselves report significant variation in how this data is used (Zimdars, 2010), with the idiosyncrasies of college and tutor weighing heavily (Zimdars, 2016). Only the importance of the tutorial interview transcends this, operating as the dominant means of post-shortlisting selection among tutors (Faculty of History - University of Oxford, n.d.; Zimdars, 2007)

This discursive subject-focused interview seeks to emulate the university's tutorial-style teaching (The University of Oxford, 2019), in order to assess students' reasoning capacity, comfort with new ideas, and immersion in the subject (Zimdars, 2010). It is intended to ensure a student will thrive (The University of Oxford, n.d.) in the liberal educational ethos traditional to the university (Rothblatt, 1976). While the interview remains under-researched, success is defined by the 'meeting

of minds' of students and tutors (Brown et al., 2016:202), and a deliberate transcending of curriculum-based school knowledge (Working Party on Selection and Admissions, 2005).

The result is a well-documented and widely-perceived (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2013) inequality in offers. Independent school-educated students secured 27.4% of AAA results, but 41.8% of offers in 2015 (The University of Oxford, 2018a), with a handful of elite independent schools securing more offers than the least successful 2000 state schools (The Sutton Trust, 2011). Despite significant variation by college (The Sutton Trust, 2016), in 2017 independent school-educated students had a 24% success rate compared to 18% for state educated (Bolton, 2019), despite similar grades (The Sutton Trust, 2008b). Similarly, during 2015-17 45% of state-sector offers were given to students attending 163 grammar schools, compared to 55% from the 1,849 non-selective schools (Mansfield, 2018). Successful students are overwhelmingly from the top two economic quintiles (The University of Oxford, 2018b) with offers showing significant economic (Montacute & Cullinane, 2018; Social Mobility Commission, 2016), racial (The University of Oxford, 2018a), and regional (Allen et al., 2016) disparities.

1.2 Debate

Explanations of this inequality remain stalemated, with position crystallised through institutional, political, and social positions. This is a potential reason for the lack of research in admissions inequality (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013), and contributes to an atomisation of understanding across various stakeholders and a corresponding incoherence of provision.

The main, often interwoven, arguments include:

- Socioeconomically unrepresentative admissions tutors being consciously or unconsciously biased. (Blackledge, 2001; House of Commons, 2016; House of Lords, 2018; Lammy, 2017; UCAS, 2016b)

- Variation in economic resources at applicants' disposal differentiating support for applicants and differences in preparedness. (Hyde & Wu, 2016)
- State-sector schools providing less effective support to applicants. (Clarke & Beech, 2018; House of Lords, 2018; Kirby, 2015; The Sutton Trust, 2008a; The University of Oxford, 2018b)
- Self-marginalisation of state-sector students due to lower aspirations and (mis)perceptions of Oxford/its intake. (Copestake, 2010; Cummings et al., 2012; UCAS, 2016a)
- Familial ability reflects both in economic outcomes and success in Oxbridge applications. (Zimdars, 2010)

1.3 Episteme

These positions tend not to reference educational research, treating the admissions process as a taxonomy of an individual's relative progress along a linear mode of ability, which is then buffeted by outside social forces. In this, ability, assessment, and hierarchies of knowledge are assumed to be common, singular, and stable whereas in the literature they remain highly fluid and contested.

Given the poorly defined success criteria of the tutorial interview (Nicholson, 2013) it is contextualised by a (largely unstated) curriculum and theory of knowledge (herein described as an *episteme*) held by socially unrepresentative tutors. As academics, this episteme is likely to differ to that of government and exam boards, the dominant force in episteme formation in pre-18 education. Congruence with the former must be knitted from additional directed or self-study, opportunities which are socioeconomically situated.

While there is no shortage of debate on these concepts in the research literature, frustratingly little of it applies directly to Oxford admissions. However, the limited evidence points to this far more complex relationship between admissions, dynamics of knowledge, and inequality. Where knowledge is accounted for via questionnaire or prior academic performance the inequality of

access disappears (Bhattacharya et al., 2013; Zimdars et al., 2009), suggesting socioeconomically-linked differences in epistemes are a factor in the inequality. This was echoed in my investigation into differing epistemes across school-type as part of my 'Part 2' assignment (XXXXX, 2019). Participants held markedly different epistemes, the Oxbridge-specificity and depth of which reflected the experience and resources of their network and school.

As (Jerrim, 2013) points out a significant amount of the mechanism causing the inequality in offers remains unexplained. By examining the dynamics of admissions, episteme, and inequality we can potentially reduce this gap.

1.4 Existing interventions

This is essential as currently, reflecting the dominant explanations, few interventions address episteme. 4 out of 321 feedback responses for a recent outreach project at Oxford highlighted knowledge (Corpus Christi College University of Oxford, 2018), and in an audit of the decentralised college outreach in (XXXXX, 2019) (Appendix A) few (n=6/33) provide any form of episteme focus, with the majority focusing on aspiration (n=13/33) and information (n=25/33). Central university efforts, such as the UNIQ and Pathways programme, show better focus on episteme (Hyde & Wu, 2016; University of Oxford, 2018b), but remains a fraction of the £6.5m spent annually on outreach.

Likewise, critics who suggest a wholesale reform, including centralised admissions and foundation years (Lammy, 2018; Sodha, 2018), risk misdiagnosis. If the mechanisms shift but the role of episteme remains unaccounted for any replacement risks the same distortions as its predecessor, at best all one does is shuffle the 'winning' episteme (Zimdars, 2016). Additionally, without clarity on the dynamics of episteme in admissions schools supporting applicants risk perpetuating the inequalities. Research suggests state schools tend to lack awareness and focus on building up applicants' episteme beyond the curriculum (Lareau, 2015; Reay et al., 2005; The Sutton Trust,

2008b), a finding echoed in (XXXXX, 2019). Clarity on the importance and precise role of episteme is essential to reverse this.

1.5 Focus

This action research project aimed to identify variation in episteme among students from different school-types and compare them to that of individuals involved in admissions at Oxford. Upon identifying areas where the students' episteme is not congruent with those involved in admissions at Oxford an intervention was designed to close that gap.

While admissions tutors use a range of datapoints, this study focuses on episteme in the tutorial interview to simplify the framing of episteme and aid operationalisation. As explored above this is the only measure where a consensus of its importance exists. Additionally, as epistemes are subject-specific the depth and time required to properly theoretically map, sample, and design an intervention necessitates a limiting of the scope of the subject. History was selected due to my experience and understanding of the subject as a History teacher.

1.6 Rationale

The significance securing admission to Oxford and existing inequality presents a pressing need to investigate. Given my area of professional practice and collaborative networks, such an investigation has a significant chance of impact on Oxford admissions on a local, policy, and university level.

As the head of higher education and partnership at an independent school I organise the 'Oxbridge' programmes at my school and for our network of 7 local state schools. I am currently building an equivalent to our existing Medicine programme for 'Oxbridge' admissions. The Medicine programme's national recognition is founded on eschewing token 'one-off' sessions for a planned and intensive curriculum providing foundational knowledge and shifting epistemes for Medicine. To

mirror this for Oxbridge admissions requires original action research as the existing literature in this area is far scanter than when compared to Medicine admissions.

Liaising with and providing CPD to staff at our partner schools is a central plank of our partnership. This action research involves extensive collaboration with my own and partner schools' Head of Sixths, HoDs, and teachers, as the literature and (XXXXX, 2019) shows, school context is vital in understanding the dynamics of episteme. Additionally, this study necessitates extensive collaboration with individuals involved in admissions at Oxford in order to provide a framework to understand the divergence in epistemes. In both cases it is envisaged that collaboration during the research will greatly improve its quality, and in turn the research's results will become the platform for discussion with these stakeholders to highlight the impact of divergent epistemes and model interventions. (XXXXX, 2019) was shared with partner schools, as well as individuals involved in central, departmental, and college admissions at Oxford, with numerous follow-up discussions held. With an action research more refined, focused, and developed than (XXXXX, 2019) it is hoped the conclusions and modelled interventions can further these initial findings, impacting policy at local and university level. This will be mirrored as part of my collaboration at a policy level through my involvement in 'Schools Together', an alliance of partnership coordinators across the independent sector. Our school's intensive approach and belief in the impact of quality partnership has led to invitations to contribute to workshops and literature in the alliance. This study is intended to form an additional case-study in our efforts to encourage independent schools to think more seriously and pedagogically about partnership provision, providing a model to be adopted elsewhere.

1.7 COVID-19

Following infections in our community my school suspended all partnership activity, including the action research project, in March. This cut the action research cycle significantly short, reducing the extent of intervention and thus depth and reliability of results. Resultantly, this study cannot be

completed as planned. Instead it will present the theoretical framing, literature review, and planned methodology in its entirety. However, due to the limits in data collection and intervention length its findings and thus its discussions and conclusions will be abridged. Therefore, it is best characterised as a theoretical research study with some initial and tentative findings.

Literature Review

2.1 Contingent literature reviews

Due to the lack of research around episteme in Oxford admissions there is no consensus on study framing, means, and measures. Thus, the theoretical framework and literature underpinning intervention decisions have to be constructed. This presents a challenge as the literature required to inform successive stages of intervention design will not be evident in advance. The full literature review is thus contingent on the unfolding stages of the action research cycle.

Each stage of the action research will be preceded with the cycle-specific literature review, contingent on the findings in the prior stage. Given the study's early termination this is particularly important and has meant tentative conclusions need to be immersed in the literature review to allow triangulation. The initial literature review will focus on the underpinning theory of inequality of Oxford admissions.

2.2 Meritocracy and Oxford admissions

Oxford tutors do not see themselves as affected by elite network social connections in admissions decisions (Mountford-Zimdars, 2015). The university prides itself on its intellectual and academic status, built on a liberal model of intelligence and education (Rothblatt, 1976). Its students and staff hold its fundamental meritocracy as a truism which can often guide their understanding of the roots of inequality (Brown et al., 2016; Warikoo & Fuhr, 2014a).

Yet admissions form an essential self-sustaining role of a university's culture and sense of self, regulating and inducting students and future alumni and operationalising its intellectual identity into criteria (Bourdieu & Passerton, 1990; Pascarella et al., 2006). As (Clancy & Goastellec, 2007) argue simply removing formal barriers and opening up to equal competition does not create meritocratic

social mobility if unequal opportunity to meet success criteria persists. Knowledge of the intellectual mores which define the success criteria is inherently uneven among familial education and school type (Ogg et al., 2009). With admissions assessment inherently reflecting received norms, avoiding stated and specific curricula, and indexed to nebulous sense of 'cleverness' the meritocracy of admissions is tainted by the benefit of socioeconomically-linked congruence with the institutional norms of Oxford (Mountford-Zimdars, 2015).

Given the benefits of the symbolism of an Oxford degree in our economy of 'talent' (Brown et al., 2016) and structural valuing of educational scarcity (McCowan, 2016) this is not merely an esoteric debate. While 'the elite' may be more nebulous today (Turner, 1960)'s 'elite-sponsored' characterisation of mobility in Britain remains a conception of the dynamics of mobility and meritocracy in Oxford admissions.

2.3 Theoretical framing

Without theory to frame findings a study into Oxford admissions risks becoming 'a grab bag of partial data and observations […] lying haphazardly' aside one another (Breuer, 2008:3), limiting our understanding and interventions. To this end this study utilises the work of French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. His focus on privileged knowledge, elite gatekeeping and sponsorship, socioeconomic power, student agency, and access to elite higher-education proves the most applicable framework to conceptualise Oxbridge admissions. Yet given challenges presented by his work his framing cannot be simply be appropriated.

2.4 Bourdieu as thinking tools

Insouciant about 'an over-scholastic dedication to consistency' (Nash, 2003b:445), Bourdieu's works can be vague, obtuse, and contradictory. Yet he continues to dominate educational research (Sallaz

& Zavisca, 2007). This tension has led to strident criticism (Goldthorpe, 2007b) and even suggestions that his position in the discipline is akin to a 'cult' (Kingston, 2001).

These fears are somewhat grounded. Bourdieu's work has been accused of being founded on supposition with little empirical basis (Goldthorpe, 2007a) and riddled with gaps and tensions (Atkinson, 2010). His fluid concepts (Grenfell, 2014) and problematic dislike of definitions (Nash, 1999) make refutation impossible (Sullivan, 2002) and concepts so broadly defined that they become catch-alls (Zimdars et al., 2009). This 'lack of consensus over meanings and measures'(S. Davies & Rizk, 2017:349) leads to a balkanisation of the literature with definitions fixed by individual researchers (Kingston, 2001) making empirical discourse challenging and frequently reduced to interpretative disputes.

To apply Bourdieu uncritically as a research framework to explain complex phenomena is to invite overreliance on the investigator's own compounding and arbitrary rulings on these vague concepts and tensions as they are operationalised. Resultant conclusions inevitably become situated in unstructured and investigator-specific norms, hampering generalisability and validity. More perniciously it conditions a pattern of discourse detached from the empiricism provided by clear and static frameworks, encouraging quagmire and challenging the growing epistemological robustness of educational research as a discipline.

However, as (DiMaggio, 2007) suggests many of these valid criticisms tend to miss the intent of his work. Bourdieu's ambiguity reflects an intellectual mode fading in his time and a little dissonant in today's discipline, with his preoccupation toward establishing grand theory as opposed to detailed provincial work (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). His focus was capturing the complex social forces around education, power, and social mobility by examining their relational dynamics, not itemising a particular space and time (Nash, 2003a). Such an approach necessitates a fluidity in order to capture

broad meanings with sufficient provisionality (Lareau, 2001), and while Bourdieu himself recognised the academic shortcomings of this approach (Lizardo, 2008) the methodology reflects his aims and intent.

This is the root of Bourdieu's limitations and utility. Insufficient at the micro-level, undeserving of slavish application, yet useful as a means to conceptualise and frame macro-level relationships and forces. As (Lamont, 2012:230) argues 'questions asked as opposed to uncritical synthesis' Bourdieu's theory provides researchers with the 'tools of thought' (Nash, 1999:185). Such thinking tools are essential to make sense of scattered findings and hyper-specific studies (Breuer, 2008; Sanders & Robson, 2009) and frame meaningful analysis of findings (Ball, 2003). Naturally, use of Bourdieu's theory requires some heurism (Vryonides, 2007). Yet this can be managed through carefully indexing his work to subsequent debates and research (P. M. De Graaf, 2007) and 'thinking beyond and even against Bourdieu' (Atkinson, 2010:15) where necessary.

2.5 Defining cultural capital

Bourdieu argues inequalities in held, owned and accredited 'cultural capital' is a key driver of unequal access to elite higher education. Possession of this culturally-valorised, socioeconomically lopsided capital is conflated with ability in education systems, in turn providing systematic advantages, admission, and rewards to those fortunate to possess them (Bourdieu, 2003). Yet it remains frustratingly undefined *what* this cultural capital is (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger, 2003), spawning a cottage industry of divergent definitions (Barone, 2006). Bourdieu was further characteristically vague on the mechanism of transmission and how it impacts student success (Jaeger, 2009). While the concept is among his most criticised (Goldthorpe, 2008), a clear sighted understanding of what Bourdieu is attempting to capture as opposed to parsing the linguistics of the term is essential to conceptualise and operationalise it (Breuer, 2008).

Coifed in part by Bourdieu's examples, cultural capital has traditionally been linked to the beaux-arts and 'high-brow culture' (DiMaggio, 1982, 2007; Dumais, 2006; Sullivan, 2001; Wildhagen, 2010). However, this definition owes much to the 'peculiarity of the French context' (Lareau & Weininger, 2003:578) in which Bourdieu was writing as opposed to its intrinsic value (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Today, socioeconomic patterns of cultural participation are more complex (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Sintas & Alvarez, 2002) and less important in most western nations (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004). Thus these narrow and overly-faithful definitions have come under sustained challenge in recent years (Andersen & Hansen, 2012; Kingston, 2001) with students' cultural capital defined incredibly broadly, including parental discussions (Roksa & Robinson, 2017), communication with schools (Farkas et al., 1990), reading (N. Graaf et al., 2000), proxied parental support (Reay, 2001), as well as access to resources and desks (Eitle & Eitle, 2002).

Definitions and counter-definitions dominate much of the discussion and preclude a meaningful and constructive empirical progress (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). By placing the locus of debate on these definitional parlour games researchers in effect divorce cultural capital from the underlying theory (Jaeger, 2009). As (Dobbin, 2008:61) has argued 'the practice of paradigm-splitting and navel-gazing [has] impoverished our broader mission'.

Chronically underappreciated in this conflation of cultural 'capital' with cultural artefacts is the importance of 'transubstantiation' in capital theory (Wildhagen, 2009). In capital theory Bourdieu is attempting to capture context-dependent, socially mediated distinctions, not a intrinsically valuable artefact (Bourdieu, 1986). It is a vehicle to 'illuminate the links between the system […] and the agents' (Krarup & Munk, 2016:771). The 'value' and impact of a particular artefact are 'valorized by power relations rather than by aesthetic qualities intrinsic to them' (R. Moore, 2004:447) thus entirely dependent on the rewards it can be 'transubstantiated' into. Given wide sociocultural forces defining value this naturally differs by and thus is inseparable from the specific *field* it is being

deployed (Gaddis, 2013; Jaeger, 2009). Cultural capital is therefore not a constant (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997) nor one-dimensional concept (Jaeger, 2009), indeed in disadvantaged communities cultural capital exists, albeit in different artefacts with low transubstantive value in elite networks, and vice versa (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Young, 2013b).

2.6 Knowledge as capital

Bourdieu emphasised the centrality of vague criteria in university admissions rewarding ownership of academically valorised knowledge (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & de Saint-Martin, 2012), a dynamic exemplified by Oxford admissions (Zimdars, 2016). Yet he, and resultantly much of the literature, remained curiously quiet on whether knowledge itself can be cultural capital.

If one moves past a linguistically rooted definition the 'cultural' in cultural capital denotes a 'culturally-transmitted consciousness' (Beck, 2007:48) as opposed to a rigid affiliation with the arts. This provides a much more expansive conceptualisation which captures the exclusivist function of capital and rightfully places field at the core of its operationalisation. To this end (Lareau & Weininger, 2003:568)'s definition is instructive: *'cultural and social competencies such as familiarity with relevant institutional contexts, processes, and expectations, possession of relevant intellectual and social skills (e.g. 'cultural knowledge' and 'vocabulary'), and a more strategic conception of agency'*.

Framed this way, knowledge mirrors other forms of cultural capital. It is transubstantive, with deployment yielding benefits dependent on field (Lamont & Lareau, 1988), and legitimised knowledge changing over time and contexts (Vryonides, 2007). Likewise knowledge as cultural capital is unevenly distributed socioeconomically, requiring specific and frequently exclusive educational contexts to be activated (Roksa & Robinson, 2017). The widely researched socioeconomic inequalities in cultural capital, HE admission, and school success is in fact a proxy for

parental education (Barone, 2006; Beck, 2007), professional engagement in knowledge-dependent fields (Andersen & Hansen, 2012), and access to knowledge discourses through reading (N. Graaf et al., 2000). Indeed, the significant impact of student reading (Krarup & Munk, 2016; Zimdars et al., 2009) seems to owe more to the cultural knowledge reading imparts as opposed to the cultural participation of reading itself (Sullivan, 2002, 2007). In the Oxford context, knowledge as opposed to participation was a measurable predictor of admissions success, particularly in the arts (Zimdars et al., 2009).

2.7 Epistemologies of knowledge as capital

A common-sense proposition may characterise students with high levels of knowledge as having identified and captured a 'true' and free from social character 'core' of knowledge and advanced further up its intrinsic hierarchy, with the differential explained by ability to parse this out of the intellectual ether. This seriously challenges the capital thesis as inequalities owe more to individual differences not structural forces.

Yet logical positivists and logical atomists with a focus on language have both struggled to identify said hierarchies or estimations of value which are free of social character and with meanings which rest on an infallabist basis (R. Moore, 2000b). Knowledge is structured, not 'found' (Naidoo, 2004). Yet the hyper-relativism which Bourdieu relied upon in capital theory also misreads knowledge (Beck, 2007). 'While in the broad anthropological sense, all knowledge can be regarded as arbitrary within a given society' (Nash, 2003a:51) this 'oversociological view of knowledge' (Young, 2008:3) leads to unhelpful politicisation and a dismissiveness of the fact that knowledge is structured, however arbitrarily (Young, 2013a). By stopping after recognising the social basis of knowledge Bourdieu underappreciates the atomisation of power and knowledge formation, the disciplining effects of internal structures, and its complex dynamics and impacts (Young & Muller, 2013).

By putting knowledge on this pedestal both sides miss that all knowledge is fallabist (Niiniluoto, 2002), provisional, and bracketed by modes of 'knowing' of differing reliability. Instead 'Scientific realism' (R. Moore, 2000a) is instructive. Knowledge is built by structures of ways of knowing, which while provisional and of a social nature, has mutually agreed foundations and produces knowledge which is emergent and critical. These structures of knowing are not neutral, instead exerting considerable impact on social framing and academic product of a discipline (Bernstein, 1996; T. Moore & Maton, 2001). Yet as disciplines they have shared objects of study and means of knowing to display that they possess 'legitimate, shared and stably reliable means for generating truth' (Young & Muller, 2010:17). This discourse separates and 'elevates' itself from everyday and community ways of knowing through hierarchies of knowledge, specialist vocabulary, and norms (R. Moore & Muller, 2002), and by deploying these the discipline 'insulates' itself protecting its 'unique voices and identities' (R. Moore, 2000b:186). Given these structures are social the 'collective collegiate autonomy' is managed by careful admission, certification, and validation, often through discipline-relevant institutions (Beck & Young, 2005:188).

This naturally has 'elite collusion' (Young, 1999:446) with disciplinary knowledge 'intrinsically esoteric' (Beck, 2013:186). Yet Young's concept of 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2009) is not a helpful vehicle for operationalisation given its vagueness (Young, 2013b) and reliance on examples not an underpinning taxonomy (White, 2018; Young, 2014). Moreover, the valorisation on knowledge depends on its context, thus often arbitrated by the powerful, blurring his categories. However, this emphasis of disciplines does not serve to legitimise the governmentally-endorsed (Yandell, 2017) work of Hirsch (Hirsch Jr, 1987, 2006). Hirsch's emphasis on cultural literacy supposes the intrinsic value of individual knowledge and an insouciance of disciplinary ways of knowing. In reality, knowledge is far more unstable and contextual (Lambert, 2011) with means and modes of knowing crucial, not individual 'packets' which serve at best as an indirect 'fable' for the former (Reid, 2006).

Universities have a significant institutional role in coding and regulating this disciplinary knowledge, and by virtue of this are forced to navigate the paradox of the Bernsteinian 'sacred', where knowledge is authoritatively coded yet its insecurity is recognised (Beck, 1999). Oxbridge is no exception to this (Barnes, 2018). To reconcile this, the university serves as means to carefully induct students to this disciplinary reality (Reid, 1999), as opposed to simply instilling a canon. The required mode of thinking is naturally separate to everyday knowledge and most school curriculums (Beck, 2013) increasing its scarcity and thus distinctive value. Yet its possession is unevenly distributed, with Oxford admissions tutors privately recognising the importance of a student's acculturation beyond and separate to formal exams and the everyday (Zimdars et al., 2009).

2.8 Habitus and knowledge

An example of this tension in the sacred is possession of capital is conflated with cognitive ability yet also recognised as a result of socioeconomic inequality (Brown et al., 2016; Zimdars et al., 2009). Bourdieu was predictably unclear and vacillating on the relationship between the cognitive ability, effort, academic behaviours, and capital (Bourdieu, 2002). This is aggravated by the lack of consensus in defining cognitive ability as separate to the others (Nash, 2005a), with much yielded to 'folk' categorisations (Nash, 2005b). The literature suggests the mere opportunity of acculturating capital does not explain its possession, deployment, or divergences (Andersen & Hansen, 2012; Barone, 2006; Gaddis, 2013; Jaeger, 2009; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999), with cognitive differences among students exerting some impact. Given the limits of this study and lack of research consensus around intelligence a full examination is undesirable. Instead, following (Nash, 2001)'s critique of Bourdieu and ability this study will not address the debates and relationship of 'primary effects' (intelligence/neurodiversity) with capital and will instead focus on 'secondary effects', or habitus, the forces which create student differences beyond primary effects. This limits the conclusions but given the nature of this study it the most viable route to an effective intervention.

Mirroring capital theory habitus is best understood in the macro, as the mediator of Bourdieu's structures, not over-led by his scattered examples (R. Moore, 2004). Habitus reflects that capital has to be activated, and this varies by individual choice, competence, and contextual awareness (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Thus habitus is a 'situated frame which we see the world' (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014:197) specific to individual field competitions, and rooted in prior inculcation (Grenfell, 2014; Lizardo, 2009). This internal framework makes 'some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable' (Reay, 2004:435), and acts as a generative schema crystallising provincial social structures and socialisation (Nash, 1999). This interpretation calls into question the traditional position that habitus and capital are distinct (Roksa & Robinson, 2017), given both are 'two sides of the same socialization process: the situated internalization of cultural schemas' (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014:207). Habitus without capital has no organising or directing capacity and capital without habitus remains inert (Lizardo, 2009).

Habitus is underexamined in the literature (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008) and where operationalised tends to be vague and one-dimensional (Reay, 1998b) with most reducing habitus to 'tools, logics, and strategies of action' (Calarco, 2014:1016). This essentially renders the habitus a generic and narrow list of dispositions, which in reality fails to capture the complexities of individuation to field (Atkinson, 2010).

As habitus is emmeshed with capital its nature and optimal form is contingent on the field (Nash, 2003b). Differing fields will require different dispositions and activation of different forms of capital in different ways (Dumais, 2002), thus habitus-field congruence, or 'fish in water' to use Bourdieu's parlance, is vital for success in field competition (Edgerton et al., 2013). The 'rules of the game' in a given field, defined by the dominant institution(s) which negotiate and valorise 'what constitutes cultural capital' (Davey, 2012:513). In the academic setting where the institutions define knowledge

as capital, an optimal habitus is concerned with dispositions towards identifying, inducting, and demonstrating the forms of knowledge valorised by the dominant institution. This 'cognitive habitus' requires the ability to make use of information and think in field-indexed ways (Nash, 2005a) and a knowledge of, and disposition towards, academic practices which inculcates and furthers this (Edgerton et al., 2013). Thus the 'rules of the game' in the academic setting, particularly among elite universities includes 'what knowledge truly is in a given context' (Sullivan, 2007:4), exploration of the hierarchies of knowledge and 'specialist cognition' to access them, as well the academic agency to realise them (Nash, 2002:446).

These knowledge structures, such as reasoning and ways of knowing are inherently socially situated with unequal student access (Krarup & Munk, 2016) leading to marked socioeconomically-linked variation in their field-congruence and success (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Thus habitus reflects the same inequalities as cultural capital, with internalisation of habitus resting on socialisation which is most effective in the 'total' environments of family and school (Horvat & Davis, 2011).

Wealthier families provide greater socialisation of the 'rules of the game' (Wildhagen, 2009), leveraging their higher field position to ensure greater field-habitus congruence in the behaviours socialised. The 'yield' in terms of habitus-field congruence is lower among socialisation within disadvantaged families due to the weaker field position creating a socialisation more loosely tailored to the 'rules of the game' (P. M. De Graaf, 1988; Jaeger, 2009). Likewise, schools are vital to socialise habitus yet replicate their own field-position among their students, frequently entrenching field inequalities. Schools cultivate their own 'institutional habitus' which they consciously model and inculcate into their student body (byrd, 2018). The specialism, emphasis and precise field-specialisation vary by school context, with elite schools emphasising and providing a more robust habitus indexed to fields beyond examinations, such as university admissions and 'soft skills' for the professional world (Davey, 2012).

2.9 Field

Therefore, field is where inequalities are both mobilised and entrenched. Conceptually field represents the ethereal 'arena' of a specific area of social competition governed by usually unsaid 'rules of the game' set by the dominant gatekeepers (Bourdieu & Nice, 2013). Governed by social forces, field is dynamic and responsive, acting as the 'locus of the relations of force' of social phenomena (Lareau, 2001:80). Therefore it is neither tangible nor descriptive, serving as a vehicle to capture the relationality of actors and provisionality of habitus and capital without excessive reductionism (Martin, 2003). They are intrinsically context-specific, with actors enmeshed within several 'fields', each with their own 'institutional logics and exchange rates of capital' (Jaeger, 2009:1945) which govern the competition, 'value' of specific socialisations, and weaponise inequalities.

This 'valuation' is responsive to the valorisation by the field-relevant institutional gatekeepers (Lareau, 2001) who frequently reflect the norms of the existing elite (Naidoo, 2004). These often unrepresentative field-dominant institutions thus serve a legitimating agent of forms of capital (Roksa & Robinson, 2017) to which actors seek to strategically compete to conform (Jaeger, 2009). This naturally skews socioeconomically, with familial and schooling differences leading to quantitively and qualitatively different stocks of cultural capital, its field-relevancy, and field-specificity of habitus (Grenfell, 2014). Field competition is therefore inherently and indirectly exclusionary, with alienation and self-exclusion of groups unfamiliar with the dominant valuations, unequal distributions of 'resources' for equal criterion, and undervaluing of resources outside of the valorised (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Those ontologically complicit (Bourdieu, 2003) who understand, however unconsciously, and take advantage of the field rules are the net 'winners'.

2.10 Field in Oxford admissions

The field of Oxford admissions is distinct from students' concurrent academic fields given the very different institutional goals, means, and identities of schools and examination bodies. It follows that this is in turn reflected by a separate valuation of capital and thus 'ideal' habitus in the field of Oxford admissions compared to mainstream education. Structurally, the admissions system lends itself to the importance of cultural capital. The oral, unbureaucratic, and non-standardised mechanisms of assessment all rely more heavily on tacit cultural capital and familiarity with the institutional rules of the game (Andersen & Hansen, 2012). This is encouraged by the emphasis on the alchemy of the selection process among tutors (Zimdars, 2016) relegating many of the rules of admission to the informal and unsaid, access to which is socioeconomically uneven (Lareau, 2015).

There is a paucity of literature on the Oxford admissions process as a form of assessment. What can be gleaned reflects the preoccupation with the reflective, disciplinary, and epistemological as opposed to substantive knowledge. However, this is frequently mediated through the shorthand of 'reasoning', a curiously unspecific concept which remains socially defined (Bourdieu & de Saint-Martin, 2012). This presents a potential tension as on first glance these forms of field-distinction involve different realms of 'ability'.

Tutors and successful applicants emphasise the importance of intellectual rapport at interview (Warikoo & Fuhr, 2014b) where more complex positions are generated through a sherpaed reasoning process (Zimdars, 2010). Substantive knowledge matters less, with the epistemological nature of a packet of knowledge as well as the ability to generate further understanding through a priori reasoning being key (Zimdars, 2007, 2016). In this way distinction in Oxford admissions reflects the normative values of (English) liberal education (Rothblatt, 1976), with the emphasis on cultivating open-ended and generative modes of thinking as opposed to canons (Mangset, 2017). This model has been largely stripped of its moral and religious early 20th century notions (Magill,

2009), and pressured by the financial realities of 21st century higher education (Palfreyman, 2013). Moreover, the dubious epistemological foundations of much of the liberal education tradition, in particular its focus on the 'concreteness' of knowledge finds itself out of step with modern disciplinary thinking (Mulcahy, 2008).

While commonly viewed as 'above' knowledge, liberal education requires a working theory of knowledge to provide a fodder and 'grist' for reasoning (Deng, 2018). It is here the tension is reconciled. The disciplinary and broader epistemological approach to knowledge serves as the vehicle through which a priori reasoning is 'tested'. There is no specific literature on the models of distinction and knowledge of History admissions tutors at Oxford. Tentative evidence based on an analysis of past interview questions for History courses (Appendix B) suggests that tutors fall back on their disciplinary modes of thinking and hierarchies as an assessment device, with 34 out of the 42 questions relying on some disciplinary knowledge to frame. This seems compounded by the need to avoid the biasing effect of relying on substantive knowledge which is highly dependent on the chance of learning, with only 18 questions pertaining to knowledge the student has been taught, and none of those focusing on assessing substantive knowledge. None of the 32 questions with a clear requirement of a priori reasoning were 'abstract', all being rooted in the subject. Given the aforementioned limits on substantive knowledge the 'grist' of assessment framing falls to disciplinary knowledge and 'ways of knowing' in most cases.

While necessitating further study the evidence suggests that certain forms of knowledge have a significantly greater transubstantive value than others in Oxford admissions. In particular, disciplinary knowledge and reasoning ability is of greater importance that substantive knowledge. The precise contours of this have to be ascertained but students holding the field-relevant cultural capital, and the habitus best suited to activate and further it, should have an advantage in the admissions process.

2.11 Curriculum knowledge

The means to garner this form of knowledge is neither automatic or equally distributed, and unintentionally contributes to the false meritocracy of admissions (Nahai, 2013). School curricula framing does not simply follow the disciplinary modes of knowledge (Beck, 2013), instead it advances a framing of knowledge responsive to a range of pedagogic and outside pressures which vary by school type (Young, 2013a). Yet problematically schools are one of the few vehicles to instil such forms of knowledge separate to the everyday knowledge which tends towards the substantive (Wildhagen, 2010; Young & Muller, 2010).

This tension is vital to understand the replication of structural inequalities in admissions. Pedagogical action, the 'production of students socialised into particular discursive forms' (Nash, 2001:199), differs across school and therefore socioeconomic position. This creates corresponding differences in the forms of capital and habitus inculcated. While Bourdieu was preoccupied with teachers as the vectors of this 'symbolic violence' this represents the idiosyncrasy of his context. While teachers legitimise academic differences borne from familial advantage and capital (Leopold & Shavit, 2013) they do not act as gatekeepers or valorise specific cultural forms (Wildhagen, 2009). Given the 'enormous decline in the status of the teaching profession' their role as direct arbitrators of students' academic progress and curricula has all but diminished (Sullivan, 2001:910). Instead, teachers internalise and execute the curricula and norms set by the rising cluster of outside forces (Dumais, 2006; Maguire, 2001).

The curricula and pedagogy to realise disciplinary knowledge has been under systematic attack in recent decades from the constellation of outside and national level forces, including the DfE, OFQUAL, OFSTED, and exam boards. Regardless of genuine intent it is an 'inherently political task […] devising a curriculum' (Eisner, 1992:312), curriculum designers will always reflect their sociocultural

norms and working theory of knowledge. In recent decades the 'modernisers' have sought to use curriculum and associated pedagogies to address social inequality and improve economic efficiency, conflating the two, leading to a corresponding framing of types and forms of knowledge useful for this task (R. Moore, 2000a).

How these aims have been operationalised structurally and epistemologically is problematic. Borrowing from the theories of change of the moment, this has led towards a more bureaucratised, standardised, and test-centric model of school performance. 'Desirable' knowledge has shifted towards a more instrumental, generic skills, employability focus, with a cluster of more 'contemporary' subjects and standalone skills sessions, such as 'study skills' and 'teamwork' (Beck & Young, 2005). For traditional subjects the instrumentalism takes a different form, with subjects appropriated to develop subject contextual general skills (Kelly, 2009). Subjects in their need to be 'useful for life' are shed of their disciplinary complexity and instead used as vehicles for a troupe of familiar and employability-linked skills (Butroyd, 2001).

This shift has reduced the possibilities of the 'emancipatory role' of knowledge, with 'increased focus on the 'means' rather than the ends of education' (Young, 2013a:106) which has narrowed pedagogical experience (Winter, 2014). Substantive knowledge forms the platform for learning a government-mandated set of useful (employable) skills (Beck, 2012). This is legislated and policed by governmental bodies such as OFSTED, OFQUAL, and the DfE (Young, 2013a) who exert significant force in shaping the school pedagogy and curriculum. This is echoed in standardised examinations with similar shifts in epistemological forms towards more testable substantive forms, standing in significant tension with disciplinary ways of knowing (Butroyd, 2001). The wresting of curriculum has led to a degree of deprofessionalisation of teaching (Eisner, 1992) with the 'performance orientation' incentivising a reduction of teacher knowledge to a 'limited corpu prescribed knowledge accompanied by a set of similarly prescribed skills and competencies' (Beck, 2009:8).

This propagates a theory of knowledge that is increasingly at odds with the disciplinary ways of knowing (Beck, 2013; Young, 2006). The not instrumentally useful (Young, 2009) is deprioritised and policed out (Young, 2013a) in response to the performance structures acting on schools (Sullivan, 2002). The corresponding rise of 'teaching to the test', and thus the largely instrumentalist forms of knowledge, in exclusion to other forms of knowledge only perpetuates this (Beck & Young, 2005; Young, 2014). This encourages a form of official knowledge which is fixed around a handful of largely arbitrarily plucked skills framed by substantive knowledge with little emphasis on a priori reasoning (R. Moore, 2007). Thus a gap opens between the knowledge capital of the school system and that of disciplines (Yandell, 2017), with the latter confined existence as a 'hidden curriculum', access to which highly dependent on the priorities and institutional habitus of family and school type (Eisner, 1992; Reid, 2006).

This reductionism by 'neglect rather than by epistemic intention' (R. Moore, 2000a:29), significantly impacts student perceptions of knowledge, perpetuating inequalities. Different school priorities create 'divergent epistemological experience' within the same education system (Clegg, 2011). Elite schools more often have incentives, performance structures, and staff knowledge to encourage awareness of this parallel hidden curriculum, or fields beyond standardised examination competition (John & Carslaw, 2005; Young, 2008). Whereas state sector students are more likely to be inculcated in the type of knowledge with a capital value in GCSE/A-Level fields, not that of disciplinary ways of knowing and reasoning (Reay, David, et al., 2001; Stearns et al., 2010; Wheelahan, 2007). This exclusion is structural. Staff and students in less advantaged schools are perfectly capable of accessing and inculcating said ways of knowing, however the forces identifying, giving opportunity, and tailoring it are absent if not countervailing in the performance culture of state education (Barone, 2006).

2.12 Divergent field-strategies

Schools seek to structure the student experience through its institutional habitus (byrd, 2018) significantly impacting student field position (González & Dupriez, 2017). Differences in incentives informs divergences in institutional habitus (Reay, David, et al., 2001), social relations, practices, and resources (Nash, 2003a). This in turn differentiates capital and habitus formation among socioeconomic groups, impacting relative congruence with the field of Oxford admissions.

Intrinsic to the 'modernisation' of state schools is the reconstitution of accountability toward market-like forces (B. Davies & Bansel, 2007) through incentive schemes (Ozga, 2002). These utilise indicators such as examination results and OFSTED gradings (Beck, 2009) to drive school behaviour (West et al., 2011) as schools seek to maximise their performance to the decreed criteria (Beck, 1999; Kavanagh & Fisher-Ari, 2020). This form of market accountability, 'operates in the shadow of hierarch[ical accountability]'(Mattei, 2012:254), as it is framed and guided by government.

The result has been destabilising (Parker, 2015) with schools' institutional habitus specialised to best meet accountability measures (Bush & Glover, 2012; Male & Palaiologou, 2017). Leading to a hyper-focus on exam results (Taylor, 2016) and decline in teacher autonomy to facilitate conformity with school measures and thus reliability of outcomes (Page, 2015, 2017; Wilkins, 2011). The result has been significant normalisation (Skerritt, 2019) and remodelling of the identities of state-sector teachers (Hammersley-Fletcher & Qualter, 2010) whose professional logics and epistemological mission increasingly converge with policy objectives (Bates, 2016). This has led to a narrowing of pedagogic and curricula range among teachers (Winter, 2017) and departments (Perryman et al., 2011) as they adhere to agreed pedagogies and curriculum (Page, 2018).

Resultingly, there is less incentive or expertise in the distinct field of Oxford admissions. For many state schools, Oxbridge is 'not part of the school's normal narrative' (Perez-Adamson & Mercer,

2016:27) commanding less necessity to specialise in the field. Teachers report a lack of confidence around Oxbridge admissions (Bathmaker et al., 2013), weaker links with colleges (Reay, Davies, et al., 2001), and less time (University of Oxford, 2018a), providing half of the support of independent schools (The Sutton Trust, 2016). Without this specialism teachers directly transliterate the dominant epistemological modes of mainstream education in Oxbridge preparation (Dunne et al., 2014). Meaning their students find inculcated capital and habitus is only haphazardly congruent with that of the field of Oxbridge admissions (Montacute & Cullinane, 2018; The Sutton Trust, 2008b) and largely generic, omitting disciplinary knowledge and reasoning (Reay et al., 2005).

Naturally, individual teachers buck school priorities (Oliver & Kettley, 2010) and can provide more field-congruent support to students in their subject (Lareau, 2015). Yet this largely depends on school type, where differences in strategic specialisation in the field of Oxbridge admissions emerge. Grammar schools (The Sutton Trust, 2011) and schools in wealthier catchment areas are incentivised towards encouraging and investing in Oxbridge support due to parental pressure and the boon of a middle class (and generally high achieving) student base in the era of accountability (Donnelly, 2014; Gamsu, 2018). However, despite this, the extent and nature of school support in the state sector is weaker, with successful students frequently having to close the gap themselves privately. Such students tend to be more able and ultimately achieve higher-graded degrees than their independently-educated peers (Mountford-Zimdars, 2015; Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2016; Smith & Naylor, 2005), reflecting the differential intellectual burden between the two student groups.

For independent schools while some hierarchical accountabilities exist these are not nearly as rigid (Ogg et al., 2009). Yet they have greater and distinct market accountability, with a broader range of expectations among fee paying parents mandating a diversified institutional habitus (Kenway & Fahey, 2014). In the era of the international knowledge economy schools increasingly position themselves as providing students the intellectual and social skills to succeed (Green et al., 2011;

Maxwell & Aggleton, 2016). The shifts in state-sector competition and routes of admission to prestigious universities has further required an adaption of independent school provision in recent years (Edwards, 2002). Much of the traditional 'character' education has been cut in order to ensure and assure high grades and provide a simultaneously robust curriculum of soft-skills, enrichment, and university preparation (Walford, 2006).

These schools situate exams among a wider set of capital in order to secure success on a more diverse range of fields (Watts, 2007). They pay significant attention to coifing the institutional norms, rituals, and messaging to build the 'fish in water' habitus essential for these broader field competitions (Brown et al., 2016; Davey, 2012; Hutchinson, 2018). This requires significant investment to instil a habitus and stock of capital which provides their students with a positional advantage in non-examination but mobility-linked fields (Forbes & Weiner, 2008; Hornea et al., 2011).

Naturally this includes Oxbridge preparation, which sits at a crossroads as the symbol of the knowledge economy, mobility, and PR. Independent schools emphasise and encourage Oxbridge applications (Byrom et al., 2007) and invest resources (Dunne et al., 2014; Oliver & Kettley, 2010; The Sutton Trust, 2016) to a greater degree. Recruitment highlights its disciplinary proximity to Oxbridge/academia with preferences for Oxbridge alumni and holders of higher qualifications (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998; Kirby, 2015). With such investment and awareness, support is far individualised to specific subjects providing the specialist disciplinary knowledge in a systematic way alongside the regular curriculum (Reay et al., 2005), consciously beyond national examinations (Forbes & Lingard, 2015). As emphasised in (XXXXX, 2019) the result is a significant school-type divergence in the emphasis on knowledge and richness of understanding of the optimal strategies for Oxbridge preparation among students.

Families represent one of the few outside forces mitigating or extending this gap. Whereas Bourdieu viewed social position in purely economic terms research has found that familial education, which is proximal to but not concurrent with wealth is the main predictor of advantage (Andersen & Hansen, 2012; Barone, 2006; Sullivan, 2007). This reflects the fact that while economic resources can be used by parents to buy access to field-congruent capitals (Chin & Phillips, 2004; Weininger & Lareau, 2003) parent's familiarity with institutional norms of schools and elite universities (Calarco, 2014; Reay, 1998a) as well as capital valuations of educated fields (Cheung & Andersen, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) provides a broader advantage.

These more educated parents make 'complex and sophisticated uses of various forms of capital in the field of education' (Vryonides, 2007:878) that confer more field-relevant capital and field-effective habitus. While disadvantaged families can provide meaningful support (N. Graaf et al., 2000; Roksa & Robinson, 2017) those with the existing familiarity and knowledge of the mediating institutions in the fields of education and admissions have the advantage. By transmitting their existing consciousness earned through education (Jaeger, 2009) they are essentially replicating what they already know, whereas disadvantaged families are having to construct it, something which is 'intrinsically difficult' (Reay, 1998b:69).

2.13 Social reproduction

Given the divergence in school/Oxbridge field norms pedagogical action cannot be reduced to Bourdieu's model of semi-malicious perpetuation of inequality (Nash, 2004). State schools have arguably never been more focused on securing results and good grades for their students. In addition, elite universities are far less the deliberate gatekeepers of culture and class. All things being equal and when knowledge is controlled for 'selectors for arts subjects at Oxford exhibit a preference for state school students over private school students' (Zimdars et al., 2009:658).

Yet the fundamental tension remains, with capital valuations and thus effective habitus in the field of modern standardised, instrumentalist exam culture is different to that of Oxford admissions. Students have particularly unequal access to the latter. While this can be mediated by a certain cluster of state schools or family in reality this is also socioeconomically linked. The result is radically different student epistemes (Nash, 2002) and stocks of capital, activated by differing habitus in the field of Oxford admissions. Disadvantaged students are more reliant on a transliteration of theories of intelligence and knowledge a world apart from disciplinary and academic thinking, with advantaged students inducted to a deliberately separate episteme, indexed to a sense of disciplinary knowledge, reasoning, and an informed sense of Oxford admissions. This is only aggravated by the vague criterion deployed in interviews and unfamiliar measures (Andersen & Hansen, 2012; Bourdieu & de Saint-Martin, 2012) and emphasis on the socially situated 'reasoning'. This mode of thinking is legitimated and thus powerful, not intrinsic nor an emergent quality (Roksa & Robinson, 2017). In this way a form of Bourdieu's social reproduction exists, albeit indirect, largely unintentional and concerned more with discourses of knowledge than cultural touchstones.

Some students will be able to succeed, through knowledge grabbed, striven for, fortunately introduced to, and made the most of, as many already have (Barone, 2006). However, structurally they will be at a disadvantage, and in the aggregate less successful. To quote (Weininger & Lareau, 2003:379) the institution 'takes in students with varying dispositions and varying quantities (or types) of inherited cultural capital; as a consequence, its 'meritocratic' selection and evaluation of students results in a process of de facto sorting according to social class origin'.

2.14 Limitations

By virtue of focusing on an under-researched area this literature review relies in places on indirect investigations, incomplete policy documentation, and a thin body of studies. In particular, the precise contours of the criteria and type of knowledge which Oxford admissions tutors measure

students by remain unclear and dependent on supposition from a handful of studies and logical leaps. Similarly, the paucity of literature on the field-specific stocks of capital and epistemes held by students from different school types has meant a lack of specificity and great reliance on (XXXXX, 2019) and a tiny corpus of literature. Given the critical importance of understanding both for any intervention the initial step of the action research cycle must identify these more specifically.

In addition, this literature review has surrendered some granularity in order to capture the broader forces at work in the inequality of Oxford admissions. In some cases, such as in (2.7), this has meant 'pigeonholing' a potential adjunct to this debate due to a lack of consensus on the issue of cognitive ability and the scale of this study. In others, such as the use and modification of Bourdieu's work has been done to appropriate a conceptual 'thinking tool' to frame the research topic and thus structure the investigation. While both examples ensure the review is structured in a way to provide a coherent intellection foundation to the intervention, this means the study's conclusions cannot be a complete summary of inequalities in Oxford admissions. Rather, it constitutes a 'piece in the jigsaw' which requires addition studies to aggregate and hone, in order to further our understanding.

Methodology

3.1 Research questions

This study aims to explore the research gap around social reproduction in Oxford admissions. Given the lack of literature this requires better understanding of the specific contours of admission tutor and student epistemes in order to identify the divergence in epistemic understanding and hierarchies. Armed with this understanding the intervention will be constructed as a means to increase students' epistemic congruence with admissions tutors.

Therefore, this study comprises of the following separate but contingent research questions:

RQ1) Is there a divergence in episteme between prospective applicants for undergraduate History at Oxford and those involved in the admissions process at the University of Oxford, and does this vary by school type?

Given the aforementioned lack of research on the epistemic criterion held by admissions tutors and student episteme in History it is necessary to specifically map and identify both prior to construction the intervention. Without this any intervention design will rest far too heavily on supposition and investigator norms, limiting its validity and likely its impact on student success.

RQ2) How far can this divergence in episteme be bridged through a series of small group sessions over a 4 month period?

The objective of this project is to pilot an episteme-focused approach towards Oxbridge preparation. A pilot is necessary because of the lack of existing examples or literature to guide its construction. Given this, the proposed intervention design needs to be subjected to research scrutiny to ensure a valid and impartial base of evaluation. Without this the future partnership programme is liable to be limited in its effectiveness as it would be founded on supposition as opposed to research-informed conclusions.

3.2 Action Research

This intervention is heavily enmeshed within my professional practice as a teacher and partnership coordinator and will be conducted alongside my other responsibilities. It is therefore practitioner-led and reflective, deployed as a means to explore professional practice and not simply knowledge generation. The nature of this intent and my context necessitate the deployment of an action research framework rather than a more traditional research design.

Action research is opportune as it allows the study to be clearly crystallised in an existing context, providing a useful framing purpose. Additionally, it is more likely to create an immediate impact given the tying of an intervention to an explicitly identified professional challenge and necessity of collaboration. Most critically, it is helpful to code a norm of professional practice which is more inherently reflective and responsive, not simply for myself, but colleagues and communities involved in the study.

Yet the line between everyday professional experimentation and action research must be policed if the conclusions are to be more valid. Without clearly defined research goals and methodologies to guide its deployment there is a danger the resultant lack of structure will dilute the specificity and impact of the research. Moreover, a deliberate transcending of everyday pedagogical assumptions is necessary to ensure conclusions are reflective of a reality detached from the expectations of the individual investigator. Finally, rigorous mechanisms of assessment and evaluation must be deployed to ensure conclusions escape the confines of the conscious and unconscious norms of the investigator. By employing such clearly-defined and relatively independent means to garnering and assessing data, action research reduces the potential of investigator bias in findings.

Despite these accommodations, limitations remain. Action research necessitates inherent constraints in the scope and nature of the intervention which are contextually-rooted. Additionally,

by placing the investigator at the core of the study design, implementation, and analysis it increases the chance their conscious or unconscious bias will impact the validity of the findings. Yet this reality does not negate the structure's utility. As (Elliot, 1991:49) suggests, action research is primarily a means to 'improve practice rather than to produce knowledge [which is] subordinate to, and conditioned by, this fundamental aim'. Thus, while the conclusions may lack generalisability, in my own and collaborative context the action research serves to sharpen professional practice and reflective norms.

3.3 Research design

The research design was considerably shaped by the paucity of literature around the research questions. An initial 'cycle' addressing RQ1 is required to frame the intervention. Similarly, given the lack of existing models to inform intervention design there was a high likelihood that unforeseen issues may emerge during execution, necessitating dividing the intervention into two discreet cycles. Both require data analysis with the first half informing intervention redesign, and the second evaluating the overall effectiveness of the intervention. This means that a significant portion of the procedure of each stage was dependent on the analysis of the cycle preceding it and a contingent literature review. Thus cycle-specific intervention designs will be discussed in section 4 (Findings), with this overarching research design confined to the broad structuring, logistics, and organisation of the action research cycles.

Cycle One was aimed to address RQ1, identifying the epistemes across student groups and individuals involved in admissions at the University of Oxford. Running between January-March 2020 the two sample groups were identified and interviewed in person by the investigator, completing a series of questions about relative importance of various attributes on a Likert scale, followed by a semi-structured interview regarding their questionnaire responses. To aid comparison the same questionnaire and interview was used for both participant groups. The interviews were held at the

convenience of the individual participants, with student groups all interviewed at their school and university staff within their college or workspaces and conducted during business hours.

The results were used to inform the design of the intervention for Cycle Two which were planned to run between late March-Early May. After consultation with participating schools, 4 sessions were found to be most viable regularity for the 8 school weeks where participant schools were in term time. This was deemed to minimise disruption and be within the realities of commitment for students who were often travelling between 15-45 minutes to attend. In order to facilitate uptake among the limited sample group, as well as reflecting the need for small group sizes found in the literature review three concurrent 'classes' were run, running after school (1630hrs onwards) on different days. Group sizes varied depending on the class, with class 'A' having six students, 'B' seven students, and 'C' four students attend. All sessions were taught by me, with a member of the History department present to fulfil school safeguarding requirements. Each session was two and a half hours long, the length reflective of the literature and limits imposed by the host school's closure at 1930hrs daily. Within half an hour of the end of a given session a field diary was completed with my reflections.

Immediately at the end of the fourth session students were to be provided with a copy of the initial questionnaire to complete. This was due to the lack of viability of holding the time consuming and logistically complex interviews immediately at the end of the session. Running the interviews separately would have taken around three weeks, given the complexities in organising the meetings and number of schools involved in the study. This was decided to have too great a limiting effect on the scope of the Cycle Three which would have had to correspondingly be cut significantly short. Balancing the importance of correcting any issues the second cycle created or highlighted and these logistical constraints it was decided to proceed with the questionnaire and not interview students in this 'review'.

From the data garnered from the student questionnaire and field diary a follow up literature review was planned to inform the Cycle Three intervention design. This intervention which would have run between May-June would have followed the same structure, length, and organisation as Cycle Two given the similar time scales. Following this, students were to be interviewed during July using the same framework and procedure as used in Cycle One, in order to aid comparison. The results would then be derived from these interviews and field diary in inform the findings of the study.

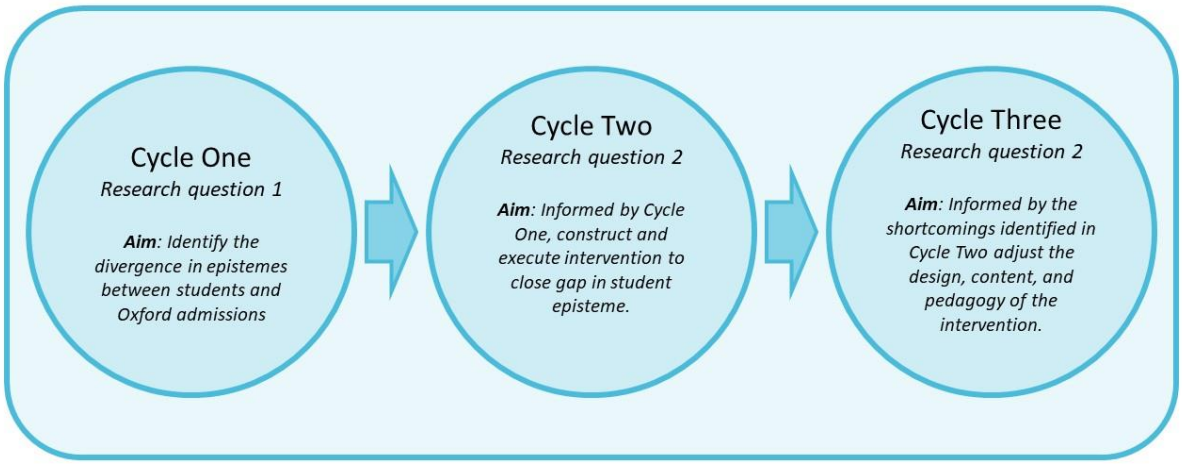


Figure 3A – Summary of research design

3.4 Data sources

The sample size was limited by the nature and topic of this study, given its relevance to a fraction of the university and school population. This increases the risk of outliers having a distorting effect on any interpretation from the data produced. Additionally, through coding the study's focus on forms of knowledge in quantitative terms to facilitate operationalisation there is a danger of excessive reductionism, in turn limiting the validity of the findings. Furthermore, psychometric validation of the interview questions was unfeasible, risking response bias. Yet to rely on qualitative data invites the risk of investigator bias in conclusions derived and comparison made. This study therefore uses a mixed methods approach, triangulating the quantitative and qualitative data as well as strengthening the validity of data analysis of the qualitative data through text-coding.

The interview structure was designed to facilitate this mixed methods approach (Appendix C). The quantitative segment aims to 'map' the History-specific epistemes of the participant by using a Likert scale to score the importance of different attributes in the field of Oxbridge History admissions. 'Oxbridge' was used as students were unlikely to discriminate between the two universities, and thus specifying Oxford risked participant confusion. A Likert scale was selected due to its familiarity and simplicity at providing a means to assess a complex and untaught topic. It served to reduce the cognitive load, particularly for the student cohort. This is vital to reduce barriers to participation and improve validity as core to the hypothesis of the study is a divergence in understanding of these concepts along socioeconomic lines. The simplicity and familiarity of Likert reduces potential friction for student groups accessing the means of measurement, and thus improves validity. Moreover, it provides a set of data which facilitates an easy comparison of a complex phenomenon with little risk of investigator bias.

By using a Likert scale, compromises on the reliability of results have to be made. The weighting of each 'score' rests on a linguistic framing which will not be common, and thus the internal validity of the results may be limited due to different participant valuations of particular scores. This risk of overinterpretation can be somewhat minimised by ensuring only significant deviations between the two sample groups form the core of analysis. In addition, Likert scales necessitate an inherent reductionism in coding complex epistemological phenomena into recognisable and distinct 'silos' to be scored. To mitigate some of the latter issues the questions were presented orally by the investigator as part of a one-on-one interview. By doing so the ability to explain and clarify details should help to avoid some of these issues. Relying on ad-hoc investigator clarification invites the risk of interviewer bias in how the student conceptualises a particular form of knowledge. This has been reduced by preparing a summary script for each phenomenon which has been designed to be a value-free as practicable (Appendix F). Yet inherently these summaries remain socially situated and

combined with circumstances where this explanation needs to be extended; the potential for unconscious norms to influence perception of the participant remains. Finally order effects in Likert scale questions exert the potential to harm internal validity, with participants unduly influenced by the position of a given phenomena and indexing to previous answers. This, as well as the impact of misunderstanding of coding, can be minimised through reframing the same phenomenon at different points within the same questionnaire. It is however a fine balance, as doing so risks participant fatigue and response completeness. Yet, interview time is finite, necessitating a strategic selection of the particularly ephemeral and important phenomena as warranting reframing.

This was followed by a semi-structured interview, aiming to elaborate and contextualise the findings of the Likert scale. In order to minimise investigator bias the questions were open-ended. The number of questions was restricted to five, to allow time for the exploration of themes emerging from the answer within the constraints of the interviews but allow reframing for one of the questions. Follow-up questions were open but to aid comparison could only be clarifications or pertain to a pre-generated list of themes relevant and outlined for each question. I conducted the interviews, given my knowledge of the research questions and underlying literature. While a second interviewer would have been advantageous to reduce unconscious bias in the interviews, the limits presented by the length of travel and timings of the interview precluded this. Audio recording was impossible due to the safeguarding limits imposed by schools, and an aversion to recordings potentially being made public among the university participants. The answers were transcribed by the interviewer during the interview; such real-time transcription risks bias in how data is captured and coded.

To minimise recall bias when analysing the free-text transcribed answers, a system of text-coding was deployed using themed codes derived from the literature. To minimise confirmation bias in this coding this could have been completed two independent coders, discussing where differences

emerged. The length and specialism of the task made this impossible. Additionally, to facilitate qualitive findings while minimising recall bias a thematic synthesis of the responses was undertaken. The validity of these results would have been improved if this synthesis was undertaken by independent analysts, however given the aforementioned limits this proved impossible.

Finally, a structured field diary was maintained by the investigator. In order to provide a means for consistent comparison and analysis a framework (Appendix E) was utilised, this was also intended to ensure reflections were framed by the research objective and not unconscious confirmation bias of the investigator. To minimise recall bias these reflections were made within 30 minutes of the session close. Nonetheless, field diaries have a significant risk of confirmation bias given they are only indexed to the lived experience of the investigator who naturally unconsciously holds norms and values which pertain to the study. Due to these inherent limitations, the field diary was used as a means to contextualise the other forms of data, not as a standalone finding in itself.

3.5 Sample Groups

Two sample groups were identified: Year 12 students considering an application to study History at Oxford and individuals involved in admissions at the University of Oxford.

Given the variation in Oxbridge familiarity across school type evidenced in the literature (The Sutton Trust, 2011) and (XXXXX, 2019), schools within 4 categories were identified: 13 Independent, 6 grammar (selective admissions), 9 State – High Access (average 1 success annually for 5 years), and 19 state – Low Access. A total of 36 Schools were initially identified, with another 11 in a subsequent draft following concerns about sample size.

Schools were contacted through their Head of Sixth via email, which outlined the study and attached the summary document as per CUREC (Appendix H). There was no follow-up contact in the event of

no response. Where a positive initial response was received a follow-up meeting was organised to ensure a clear understanding of the aims, methods, and nature of the study.

10 Schools and 17 students agreed to participate (Appendix L). The students were invited to participate through the Head of Sixth; no contact email was sought for the students, and no communication was made on an individual basis for common safeguarding reasons. In order to ensure distinction between the interests of the investigator, students, and school, this was also applied for students at my school. It proved considerably difficult to sample the student group. Only a small subsection of students apply for Oxbridge any given year, and few of those for History. This meant otherwise willing schools were unable to participate. In particular this affected State Low-Access schools, which despite being most numerous, had disproportionately little student interest in Oxbridge; this skewed the sample towards more advantaged school types.

There were no students who failed to complete the reduced intervention due to the termination of the study after the initial session. In the event of students not attending subsequent sessions their data was to be separated in findings and analysis under the heading 'partial attendance'. Those who failed to complete the final interview would have been removed from the findings.

The individuals involved in admissions at the University of Oxford were found via a search of college and university websites and contacted using their published Oxford email addresses. Participants were identified due to their role as 'an individual involved in admissions in Oxford'. This included central and college admissions staff, outreach officers, and History faculty. The email introduced myself, provided a summary of the study, and an invitation to interview. Given the limited numbers of individuals involved in these areas and sensitivity of my topic of study the sample size is small.

Ten participants responded, with none interviewed and the final cancelled due to the disruption of COVID-19. Due to challenges in sampling only six were interviewed within the January-February window planned, with the remaining three in March meaning these interviews did not inform intervention design of Cycle Two, but were used to address RQ1. As per CUREC and the agreements with the participants no breakdown will be offered on the precise backgrounds. This is due to the small sample size, close community, and sensitivity of the topic, discussed below (3.7 Ethics).

3.6 Collaboration

In my school context the safeguarding necessity to have an additional member of staff presented an opportunity for collaboration. Departmental colleagues were invited to actively participate, with CPD on the underlying theory which was held in an initial departmental meeting, and individual follow-up meetings discussing how they could support the session they were due to sit in on.

This was echoed on the partnership level. A number of partner schools were approached for participation in the study. The initial meetings were used as a similar platform to share awareness of the role of episteme, reshaping the nature of Oxbridge preparation from administrative support to pedagogical practice. In addition, their perspectives on the nature of episteme formation were essential in framing section 2.12.

Finally, on a university level the interviews always began with a 15 minute (in three cases this was extended to over an hour) introduction to the theoretical basis of this study, presenting of (XXXXX, 2019) and inequality, with university staff perspectives sought as part of this dialogue. Similar to the above this was both useful to provide a research-linked articulation, with suggestions of studies I found informative, of the roots of inequality these staff members identified in their practice. In addition, their perspectives were vital in sections 2.7, 2.10, and 4.2.

3.7 Ethics

This study was submitted for CUREC approval on 21/11/19 and approved on 16/12/19, reference ED-CIA-20-059. To ensure individuals' decisions to participate were fully informed and not swayed by my unconscious prompting to participate, a standardised information letter (Appendix H) was produced and issued electronically as part of the initial invitation to interview. Prior to starting the interview, this letter was again provided in-person and clarification on its contents were sought.

Consent was gathered using the CUREC approved consent form, using an amended template provided by the University of Oxford (Appendix I). On the day of the interview, the university sample group was provided with the consent form, given time to read it fully and sign it. Due to GDPR and safeguarding policies, the participant schools gathered the consent forms from parents and students, while I validated the returned consent forms in advance and confirmed consent pre-interview.

In my own school to avoid undue pressure on garnering consent this approach was replicated, with the Head of Sixth gathering the consent forms and liaising with parents, my role similarly validating and confirming consent. Similarly, as the Head of Partnership I potentially occupy a position of power in relation to the Heads of Sixth among the partner schools. As part of the individual preliminary meetings it was made clear to partner schools that participation was in no way linked or impacting involvement with the partnership.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity all participants and schools were given pseudonyms. There is a significant risk of identification given the very small sample size and close networks of both sample groups. To accommodate this, deliberate limits have been placed on the reported information. For the university sample this is due to the close nature of the cohort, numerous personal recommendations to invite specific participants among the sample group, and small sample

of roles. Resultingly the fine granular details of participant roles, including a highly interesting variation in responses, as well as well as enlightening but potentially idiosyncratic quotes have been omitted. Likewise, the significant variations in responses among the student cohort were found to be linked to various demographic and educational specificities of the host school and student context. However, considering the intrinsically small nature of the sample and likelihood of sharing of the final study with schools, inclusion of this data was thought to provide a level of specificity which would have had an unacceptable chance of triangulation. Moreover, individual responses of both groups were further presented using thematic analysis in order to avoid specific deploying identifiable participant 'voices'.

The provisional nature of the hypothesis underlying the intervention required an adaption of task design. As the investigator has an assumed familiarity and knowledge of Oxford applications means that student participants could potentially adopt a mechanism of access as truth, which in fact is only theorised. This raises the potential that students misrecognise the importance of various preparation approaches, shifting their behaviour without empirical foundation and limiting their eventual chances. To avoid this, systematic evaluation was conducted at the end of intervention design of Cycle One and Cycle Two, examining the questions and lesson prompts for the respective cycles and reframing those at risk of the above. Additionally, at the start and end of each Cycle Two session a standardised disclaimer was utilised to reinforce the message that the intervention was a postulated means of aiding preparation, and neither proved nor solely important.

3.8 Impact of COVID-19

Given the termination of all partnership activity, changes to the methodology had to be made. All participants only attended the first session. Holding a final interview with the participants was impossible, due to a myriad of public health, logistical, GDPR, and safeguarding issues. Therefore, the student questionnaire, designed to be completed independently by students and intended to

only be used as a mid-point review was instead used as the results gathering for Cycle Two. While the opportunity to email queries about the questions was provided no student took it, raising the possibility that responses were not fully informed. The small student sample group was made smaller by the lack of response from two participants. The Cycle One results for the two who failed to respond were retained, as these initial results pertain to RQ1. Furthermore, students responses could not be clarified through follow-up questions, meaning the results from the quantitative data sources are limited, in turn reducing their value as a form of triangulation. Naturally, these accommodations led to a reduction in the validity and utility of the findings.

3.9 Limitations

In order to focus on this area of study a number of accommodations had to be made which in turn limited the reliability and validity of results. Much of this has been explored above (sections 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7), including the reduced reliability of the sample size, intervention regularity, use of an action research approach, reductionism inherent to the Likert scale, the inability to counter the investigator bias in data collection and analysis, and ethical limitations on reportable data.

Restrictions were further created by undertaking this study in my professional context. Several 'class' groups were required to logistically ensure the sample size was as large as possible, leading to inevitable and unmeasured variation in intervention teaching across the cohort. Limits created by GDPR denied the opportunity to gather a range of contextual data to further inform the dynamics and inequalities of episteme formation.

Given the above and the study's early termination due to COVID-19, the findings are tentative and the overall study may be seen as an exploratory pilot. While this reduces the applicability of the findings it is the only way it can inform future research given the significant limits outlined here.

Findings

4.1 Cycle One

Aims

Cycle One aimed to 'map' models of reasoning and disciplinary epistemes of History in order to structure and inform the questionnaire. This was put to the two sample groups in order to identify the nature, extent, and required pedagogy of any divergence between and within the sample groups. The findings from this were analysed and used to inform the interventions in subsequent cycles.

Rationale

While this study's literature review has theorised the nature of the divergence there has been little empirical work done in this area. It is vital for validity and ethical reasons that any intervention be founded on evidence and a clear understanding of the phenomena being examined and addressed, as opposed to supposition. Therefore prior to intervention design an information gathering phase is required.

Literature Review

Significant in this is the reported role of the reflective and generative capacity of a student's thinking (Zimdars, 2010). This remains an elusive concept and unclear how it is operationalised into success criteria. In order to inform the questionnaire construction one must define and map the concept of reasoning and variations within historical epistemologies (school and disciplinary),

Reasoning as a subject of research is subsumed within the broader discourse of 'critical thinking' (CT), a vague concept challenged by a lack of consensus on definitions or applications (T. Moore, 2004). Despite university preoccupation with developing CT (Huber & Kuncel, 2016) and its relationship with academic performance (Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012) there is little consistency or system to how it is coded and assessed (Nicholas & Labig Jr., 2013). Given this definitional challenge I

have opted to reflect the characterisations of interviewed tutors (Zimdars, 2007, 2010) which emphasised systematic, reflective, and metacognitive modes of thinking. This is best captured in (Ghanizadeh, 2017:102)'s definition of 'skilfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them' and (Robinson, 2011:275)'s 'openness to having one's mind changed in the light of new evidence'.

Whether these thinking approaches are general and universal (Ennis, 1962) or specific to contexts and disciplines (McPeck, 1981) remains contentious. The former position follows that one 'acquire[s] mastery over […] critical thinking 'heuristics', which one can rationally and systematically apply to the situation at hand' (T. J. Moore, 2011:272). Generic CT tests do predict success in various disciplines (Floyd, 2011) and differences in mental load for the same task (Shehab & Nussbaum, 2015), with Ennis' work being expanded by developments of educational neuroscience (Shpeizer, 2018).

Yet an analysis of what constitutes 'logic', a vital component of the general(ist) perspective, finds it variable and governed by subject norms (Lawson et al., 2015), with the theoretician's framework arbitrating the value of particular forms of thought (Moseley et al., 2005). Moreover, such modes of thought are actioned in the context of the discipline and influenced by its content (Steur et al., 2012) and epistemological norms of a discipline and geography (Sweetman et al., 2014). Academics report variations in what 'good' CT is across disciplines (T. Moore, 2004), informed by the fact that thinking is always focused on an object in research or teaching (Jones, 2013), in turn warping hierarchies of CT to disciplinary provincialism (T. J. Moore, 2011). While there exists identifiable cognitive processes which cut across disciplines, for example deductive reasoning (W. M. Davies, 2006), evaluative and metacognitive dispositions (Finn, 2011; Stanovich, 2009), the disciplinary norms and knowledge exerts a significant force on the hierarchies and forms of reasoning which are valued and

useful (M. Davies, 2013; Erikson & Erikson, 2019; T. Moore, 2013). Therefore, when conceptually mapping reasoning it is essential to do so in its disciplinary context.

Academic history, with is relatively weak forms of knowledge validation is particularly governed by identity and epistemological forces in defining modes of thinking (Pace, 2009) compared to other disciplines (Entwistle, 2005). These are more 'interpretive, critical, divergent and 'student-centred'' (Jessop & Maleckar, 2016:698), with the provisionality of knowledge foregrounded and lending weight to forms of reasoning which reflect this (Becher & Trowler, 2001). These forms of reasoning, given History's contested and interpretation-laden epistemology, focus on ways of knowing and navigating its divergent nature as opposed to identifying singular 'answers' (Jones, 2009). Given the epistemological insecurity of historical evidence, the ability to interact with and not merely categorise the evidential base retains an importance other disciplines lack (Jones, 2007).

Students 'have often not experienced this level of uncertainty in knowledge in their previous educational experience' (Entwistle, 2005:77), with school-reasoning indexed to governmental and not disciplinary pressures (Ball et al., 2012; Fordham, 2012). Examination and 'general skill' modes of thinking owe more to the generalist models of reasoning, with the required thinking modes slimmed down to a handful of testable and applicable skills (Beck, 2009; Beck & Young, 2005; Reid, 2006). This 'managerialism' requires disciplinary reductionism to become testable and fit within the general skill modes of thinking (J. Clark & Nye, 2017; Counsell, 2011), turning reasoning into a series of technical skills to be deployed (Lim, 2015) and meaning much 'metaphenomenal' (knowledge of concepts beyond material nature) discourse and ontological complexity is lost (T. Moore, 2002). This is furthered by the shift towards an emphasis on general teaching skills, with 'subject knowledge' being demoted to an attribute, reducing teachers' capacity to instil discipline-specific practice (Fordham, 2016). Naturally, differing school contexts and teachers emphasise historical thinking in

different forms and quantities (Carroll, 2013), often dependent on teacher education level (Winch, 2019) and identity in relation to the discipline (Nye et al., 2011).

This creates students who when interviewed tend to conflate, to differing degrees, substantive understanding with thinking (Loes et al., 2015; Shim & Walczak, 2012) and become uneasy where gaps or evolution in knowledge have to be navigated (R. Barnett, 2012). Given the measurement problem intrinsic in historical thinking (Rantala, 2012) performance becomes dependent on the familiarity of success criteria in a given form of assessment (Ikuenobe, 2001). As has been discussed above inculcation of such criteria is socioeconomically unequal. Yet university criteria of reasoning assessment are discipline dependent (Nicholas & Labig Jr., 2013) reflecting differing goals (Neumann, 2001). Most university admissions success criteria is therefore discipline-linked (Banta & Pike, 2007). In part as discipline-linked knowledge to act as an intellectual 'ether' to allow demonstration (McPeck, 1985) thus rendering inseparable to academic learning of the disciplinary norms (MacVaugh et al., 2014). This creates a gap in 'academic literacy', for students unfamiliar with these norms in their History schooling (Tapp, 2015).

Design and procedure

For the specific 'mapping' of this gap models of disciplinary thinking must be identified to inform questionnaire design. Given there exists little consensus on disciplinary thinking, samples from a range of perspectives must be taken. To this end the intervention has made use of (Seixas, 2017)'s meta-analysis of the three divergent 'traditions' of historical thinking, utilising the most commonly exampled modes of thinking for each tradition in the study. Given the nebulous and overlapping nature of these traditions it is impossible to undertake direct comparison between them, rather the traditions are used as an organisational tool to inform a range of disciplinary definitions for completeness.

The first tradition conceptualises historical thinking as preoccupied with methodology. Good historical thinking is informed by a capacity to effectively deploy and emulate the methods of historians (De La Paz & Wissinger, 2015). Self-conscious objectivity (A. Clark et al., 2018) and a forensic approach to evidence (Levisohn, 2017) are key to this empirical model of thinking. The second tradition emphasises ability to work with a range second order concepts to structure narratives, (Gestsdóttir et al., 2018). This is mixed with substantive knowledge to frame historical understanding (Samuelsson & Wendell, 2016), with perspectives (Hartmann & Hasselhorn, 2008), utility, and context of sources (Lee & Shemilt, 2003) a vital means to go beyond 'everyday history'. The final tradition places historical thinking as historical consciousness. This requires an elaborated form of second order knowledge with a construction and deconstruction of historical questioning, methodology, and orientation. In this the provisionality and temporal nature of historical practice is vital in historical thinking (Thorp & Persson, 2020). Reflecting the situated frame the historian understands a fundamentally alien past (Wineburg, 2001), transcending presentism through a deconstructive view of evidence (Ashby, 2011). It is a reflexive process (Norman, 1996), underpinned by an academic agency unmoved by received thought (Nye et al., 2011), critical to existing truths (Salinas et al., 2012), and inwardly reflective of means of knowing (Tosh & Lang, 2006).

In addition, student interview responses derived from (XXXXX, 2019) were included to complement and extend the range of understandings of attributes helpful in Oxford admissions. These were student-perceived attributes important for success but not covered in the above three traditions. This is due to the fact it proved impossible to find student definitions of successful attributes for Oxford admissions in the literature, but without definitions beyond the disciplinary a Likert scale-based questionnaire risks skewing the responses away from held beliefs. These serve as decoy questions to combat the potential order effects of having solely knowledge-based responses.

The questionnaire appropriated these modes of thinking outlined in the literature for the Likert scale (Appendix J). Given the number of attributes identified, the proposed reframing questions were abandoned as inclusion of repeated questions would prove a timing challenge given the limited opportunity for interviews. The terminology from the literature was converted to more accessible forms to reduce the cognitive load of the questionnaire and the potential for misunderstandings. As this questionnaire was used by the interviewer only, accessibility and formatting was not considered. The procedure to interview and record responses followed Section 3 (Methodology) without change. All Likert questions were framed of attributes useful to Oxbridge application success.

Analysis method

Analysis followed the procedure outlined in Section 3 (Methodology). The Likert responses were collated and compared by school type and sample group. Given the 33 prompts it was necessary to categorise these into 12 headings, outlined in Appendix J. Qualitative responses were analysed using free-text coding and thematic analysis, with the key trends identified in relation to these categories. Given the small sample size 'Grammar' (2) and 'State-HA' (3) school students were collapsed into one category 'HA – Non-independent' (5) to reduce the impact of individual outliers in the respective cohorts.

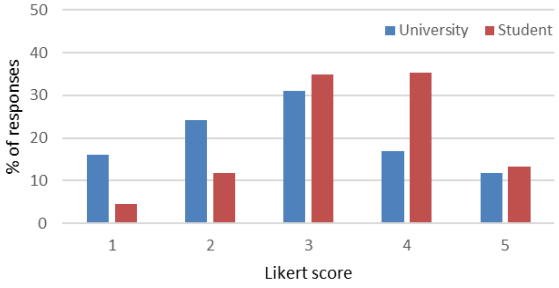
Findings

Likert scoring patterns

Figure 4C - Likert response by participant group

Score	University		Student	
	Number	%	Number	%
1	48	16.2	26	4.6
2	72	24.2	66	11.8
3	92	31.0	196	34.9
4	50	16.8	198	35.3
5	35	11.8	75	13.4

Figure 4D - Likert response by participant group



Student group responses to the questionnaire were less discriminating, with a significant clustering of scores around 3-4. In the following interviews it became clear that with a few exceptions

clustered among independent/HA non-independent school students that students were 'hedging' their responses, taking cues from the question. This was particularly the case for the most unfamiliar categories (reflexivity/reflection/epistemological provisionality), where students often scored importance highly but proved unable to articulate examples or fully explain the topic. This was despite the option being given to not score uncertain questions and explanations provided of each question where necessary. Students' lack of confidence is further suggested by the relatively few 1-2 scores, implying students were unsure distinguishing relative importance of attributes and being overly-inclusive.

This is likely to be the result of students' relative insecurity in understanding of the Oxbridge admissions process. Additionally, question framing being difficult to access, the use of the Likert scale with its low barrier to provide responses, and need for brevity in questions is also suspected to have contributed to this outcome by creating demand characteristics towards the more intellectual-sounding and unfamiliar prompts. This may have reduced the validity of findings as responses could less reliably reflect participants' held positions.

University participants were found to be more discriminating, with participants more comfortable identifying the relative importance of different attributes as well as identifying relative significance. As described above there was a higher than expected number of '3' answers in questions pertaining to discipline knowledge, potentially reflecting the fact the cohort was majority non-historian. In interviews some of these non-historians expressed unfamiliarity with discipline-specific knowledge attributes (Reflexivity/Second order/Evidential epistemology), with many expressing them as immaterial fodder for the more generalist categories of historical thinking (Reflection/Epistemological provisionality). While the historians had slightly differing results in the aggregate, their sample size precludes separate presentation on ethical and validity grounds. This is

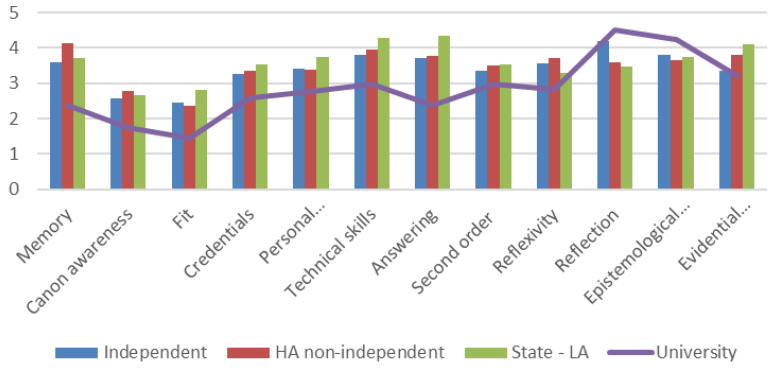
a limitation of the group sampling, presenting a potentially disproportionate skewing away for the former categories.

Comparison of categories of important attributes for Oxbridge applications

Figure 4E - Comparison of average score per category by school type

Category	Independent	HA non-independent	State - LA	All students	University	Gap
Memory	3.6	4.1	3.7	3.6	2.4	1.2
Canon awareness	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.5	1.7	0.8
Fit	2.5	2.4	2.8	2.5	1.4	1.0
Credentials	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.3	2.6	0.7
Personal characteristics	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.5	2.8	0.7
Technical skills	3.8	3.9	4.3	3.8	3.0	0.9
Answering	3.7	3.8	4.3	3.7	2.4	1.4
Second order	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.0	0.4
Reflexivity	3.6	3.7	3.3	3.6	2.8	0.8
Reflection	4.2	3.6	3.5	3.8	4.5	-0.7
Epistemological provisionality	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.8	4.2	-0.4
Evidential epistemology	3.4	3.8	4.1	3.7	3.2	0.5

Figure 4F - Comparison of average score per category by school type



Surprisingly, based on relative distribution, the participant groups were broadly mirrored (Fig. 4F). Given the small sample sizes involved, differences between school groups in this pattern were largely too small to base valid conclusions on. The study did not anticipate the relative congruence of school types, given the results of (XXXXX, 2019) and literature. This is potentially the result of smaller samples and response bias of the questionnaire from the design flaws. However, students from independent and HA non-independent schools reported less support than expected, with significant variation between schools. In addition, it is notable among the schools where divergence exists

students reported more relevant preparation, yet no student reported preparation around disciplinary knowledge. This suggests that Oxbridge preparation among this high-access cohort was weaker and less specific than the literature suggests but nonetheless existed.

Student groups generally overestimated the importance of non-knowledge attributes, with the interviews suggesting students' basis for this was rooted in unsaid norms they had picked up as opposed to instruction from schools or university literature. Few reported specific instruction on fit, credentials, personal skills, and canon. On average students had a notably firmer grounding in explaining their responses to these areas compared to historical thinking, suggesting greater familiarity with these framings of Oxbridge applications. Students' relative prizing of memory/answering was consistently justified in relation to common sense understandings of knowledge and assessment when asked for examples almost all students referenced their current studies. This suggests to a degree a projection of classroom modes of learning on Oxbridge admissions. In a similar vein, students overemphasised the more methodological end of the historical thinking (technical skills/answering/evidential epistemologies), linking back and reflecting their current studies. This was particularly the case in both quantitative and qualitative responses from students from low-access state schools.

The limited evidence suggests a deployment of classroom history, which while different in form, content, and exam board, remained surprisingly similar in student summations across the school types. Relatively few students, regardless of school type, could articulate a distinction between this knowledge and disciplinary knowledge. Those that could, either clustered at a particular school with heavy departmental involvement in the Oxbridge programme, or individual students who reported high levels of additional study into History. Such distinctions, while articulated, were often not specific or fully formed. Most who made them juxtaposed school history specific ideas they had

been exposed to (such as feminist historiography or a particular Oxbridge 'trick') rather than a separate formed disciplinary identity.

Discipline-specific comparison

Figure 4G - School type comparison of top 5 university group disciplinary responses

Question	Independent	HA non-independent	LA - State	Students	University	Gap
Systematically thinking through historical problems	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.1	4.8	0.7
Accommodating new evidence that challenges preconceptions	4.0	4.1	3.8	4.0	4.7	0.7
Willingness to change one's perspective	4.3	3.3	3.0	3.6	4.4	0.9
Questioning assumptions	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.8	4.3	0.5
Comfort not knowing things	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.1	4.3	1.2

Figure 4H - School type comparison of top 5 university group disciplinary responses

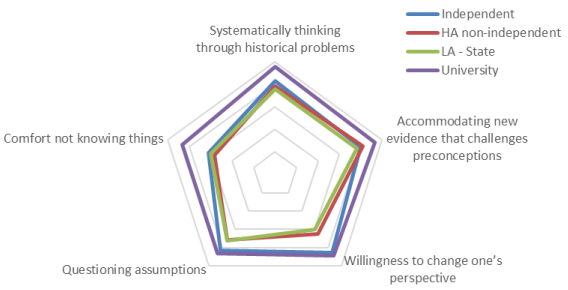
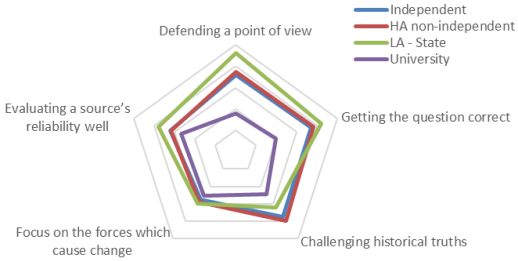


Figure 4I - School type Comparison of bottom 5 university group disciplinary responses

Question	Independent	HA non-independent	LA - State	Students	University	Gap
Defending a point of view	3.6	3.8	4.6	3.6	1.8	-1.8
Getting the question correct	3.7	3.8	4.2	3.7	2.0	-1.7
Challenging historical truths	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.8	2.4	-1.3
Focus on the forces which cause change	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.6	-0.2
Evaluating a source's reliability well	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.2	2.7	-0.6

Figure 4J - School type comparison of bottom 5 university group disciplinary responses



The dynamic is similarly reflected in the major underestimation of the student cohort around reflection and epistemological provisionality. The university group was highly uniform in the relative importance of the related attributes (Fig. 4G), although the foundation of why this was preferable was often fairly self-referential. In a number of cases this was linked to the tutorial interview. Yet echoing the literature, a clear preference towards modes of thinking which echo a form of liberal educational values, with an emphasis on a critical and generative thinking disposition was identified. The importance of this was often linked to the teaching style at Oxford, with limited supervision and highly-individual tutorials which tended away from directed instruction.

Preparation did seem to have an impact on congruence. The distinctive pattern of independent school responses reflects a consequence of the dominant preparation mode of the schools. Students' models in these areas were commonly linked to mock interviews held by the school, rather than disciplinary instruction. This meant where the attribute directly reflected a learned approach through mock interviews (questioning assumptions/changing perspectives) there was high congruence. However, where the attribute was less related to reflections from mock interviews these same students reflected similar views as other school types.

The general student group's position on these areas is masked by the response bias issues outlined above, and while there is seemingly high congruence in the aggregate this was not reflected in interview responses. Students seemed aware that these were positive traits, but did not have any particular sense of how or why they indexed to Oxbridge admissions. Rather, they were felt to be positive, a possible result of questionnaire design. Given the flaws in the data collection it is impossible to conclude how self-evident and emergent these values are among student groups without Oxbridge preparation. This is reflected in (Fig. J) with a similar level of student response for areas deemed least important among the university group.

Students, particularly those in low-access schools, linked school epistemologies to Oxbridge preparation. Similar to above, this was due to conflation and not instruction, with students resting their justifications on prior experience not disciplinary foundations. Reflexivity presented a particular problem, with one poorly worded question (historical truths). Rather than reflecting a questioning approach to the discipline university tutors often interpreted it as a decontextualized historical nihilism. Likewise, interview responses showed many students saw it as a virtue but implied a significant response bias in their inability to articulate why, conflating it with performing critical thought and being intellectually different. In retrospect the phrasing of this question is problematic on both counts, meaning conclusions on the importance of reflexivity are limited.

However, in discussing these difficulties the lack of a conceptual framework of disciplinary norms was evident among the student group. Historical thinking and knowledge were conflated and 'flat', with students across school types exhibiting little to no understanding of disciplinary ways of knowing. Reminiscent of examinations, truth and untruth were linked solely to evidential weights and actor intent, with the historian navigating these simple pressures to faithfully arbitrate. Epistemological complexity of disciplines was never hinted at in interview responses. This in part explains the relative lack of discrimination in scoring importance of forms of thinking. While students were aware that more advanced historical thinking existed, they nonetheless lacked a sense of knowledge as an architecture. Students appeared not to have conceptual form and 'grammar' of disciplinary ways of knowing in order to index the attributes. Without this, modes of historical thinking collapsed to the familiar and resonant, with little agency or discernment.

4.2 Cycle Two

Aims

Cycle Two aimed, over four sessions, to develop students' appreciation of the importance of epistemological provisionality/reflection in the Oxford admissions, framed by students' appreciation of the disciplinary epistemology around history.

Rationale

Drawing from the findings of Cycle One it was essential the intervention aimed to construct an awareness of disciplinary epistemology, and a fledgling confidence in navigating it, in order to frame historical thinking. The purpose of this was to frame those forms of historical thinking (epistemological provisionality/reflection) which had the greatest underestimation among student groups. By combining these the intervention provides a greater sense of the epistemological architecture of History, which based on the literature would best improve congruence between the two groups.

Analysis of different teaching styles found direct instruction very poor at instilling such internalised modes of thinking, due to a lack of cognitive investment in lecture formats and weak feedback loops between student and instructor (Tsui, 2002). Given attributes are inherently internal strains of thought, students require an environment of structured agency to cognitively invest and improve in these thinking skills (Nye et al., 2011). This is particularly important as in order to introduce a form of historical thinking above recall, long held student certainties must be tackled leading to a confusion tackled by tailored support (Wineburg, 2001). To navigate the transition to a more reflective and provisional form of historical thought students must be shepherded with their agency framed towards a goal. This necessitates a small-group format which allows responsive feedback, direction, and space for reflection.

The literature on how to instil awareness and capacity in these areas is sparse, with no models of attribute-specific historical thinking instruction identified. After a broad review the Socratic method was found to be a potentially useful and literature-rich device used to inculcate similar modes of thinking in other contexts. Yet, the 'Socratic dialogue' is a nebulous term used for an array of practices, requiring the construction of a specific pedagogy from the literature to fit the objective and context (Altorf, 2019).

Socratic dialogue is most useful for promoting reasoning when designed to cultivate 'inner voice through a focus on self-directed disciplined questioning' (Katsara & De Witte, 2019:111). To this end agency of the dialogue must shift towards students, with the teacher a facilitator rather than instructor. Underlying this is the assumption is that knowledge is to be constructed and not merely acquired (Boghossian, 2006; Wang et al., 2008). This is difficult for students whose school experience emphasises more knowledge-acquisitional pedagogies (Duarte, 2016), yet when executed carefully

the literatures suggests dialogue can lead to greater cognitive investment (Holper et al., 2013), agency (Belluigi & Cundill, 2017), and understanding (Polite & Adams, 1997).

The topic of discussion must be selected for by conceptual accessibility (Knezic et al., 2010) and the inability for students to retreat on deploying background knowledge (Golding, 2011). By providing a discourse in this gap between an understandable framing void of existing recall, students' internal voice is called upon and scrutinised collectively (Lipman, 2003). This framing topic must be an 'open, divergent inquiry in domains where 'answers' are controversial' (Golding, 2013:93) in order to provide the opportunities to engage in discourse and ensure agency does not fall to the holder of the singular answer.

To be effective this discourse is not a discussion, where the objective is the exchange of views which in itself does little to condition the 'internal voice' (Altorf, 2019). Rather, the discourse is a means for students to hold up and scrutinise understandings collaboratively and provide 'a platform of reconsideration' to come to grips with their own 'historically affected consciousness' (Schwandt, 2001:233), leading to an internalisation of more complex modes of thinking. To encourage agency the student must be positioned as a historian navigating these disciplinary challenges as opposed to an individual learning modes of thinking (Abrams, 2015). This requires a re-conception of the role of the teacher. As the inculcation is not direct the teacher's primary means of directing learning is through coifing the learning environment to model this mode of thinking tacitly (Golding, 2011). To do so, the teacher structures the learning environment and direction to best immerse students in modes of critical thought (J. E. Barnett & Francis, 2012) and more directly provides a mode of thought to imitate and a means of correction (Burbules, 2008). This places the teacher as an expert learner and model in thinking modes not a master of content knowledge (Hmelo-Silver, 2004), directing the topic and marshalling the hypothesis and refutations through questioning (Boghossian, 2012).

This creates a tension; teacher involvement is essential to avoid poorly founded conclusions among the group and direct towards useful paths, however they cannot be overbearing to the point of stripping student agency or situating the teacher as an oracle of sorts for which discourse is a mere preliminary for the final answer (Golding, 2013). To assist in this the teacher's main focus should be cultivating the 'elenchus', identification of flaws in held beliefs, not surmising an answer in itself (Katsara & De Witte, 2019). In the 'aporia', the confusion which follows such a refutation, student agency is deployed to reformulate solutions, and the internal voice is exercised, but the teacher does not become a surrogate mode of thinking to assent to.

This emphasis on using elenchus and resulting aporia as a pedagogical tool has to be carefully constructed. Elenchus for its own sake quickly becomes 'pimping'(Detsky, 2009), where the pointed and public elenchus is used as a vector of power and not education (Oyler & Romanelli, 2014). In such cases the aporia is used as a means to demonstrate knowledge differences, rather than an educational tool to deconstruct ill-informed modes of thinking in order to reformulate them (Boghossian, 2012). While power differentials are inevitable in Socratic dialogue how the elenchus is conceptualised and managed governs its impact (Boghossian, 2002). It is essential therefore to place students' cognitive growth (Brogan & Brogan, 1995), difference (Lun et al., 2010), and agency (Stupnisky et al., 2008) at its heart when deployed.

Questioning is the dominant device in Socratic dialogue to manage the elenchus and coax students out of the aporia (Mitchell, 2006). Unlike classroom pedagogies, questioning is primarily designed to 'break up thought' (Schwandt, 2001:235) in order to forge the elenchus or provoke deeper reflection on one's reasoning out of the aporia. The intent and nature of Socratic questioning is therefore often substantively different to other forms used in teaching and as the primary pedagogical agent requires a much greater degree of incisive deployment and meta-cognitive focus (Hmelo-Silver,

2004). To navigate the challenge of this, careful consideration of question objectives is essential, with prompts helpful to improve question formation during the intervention. To this end (Elder & Paul, 1998, 2007; Golding, 2011) were used to create a list of objectives and prompts to be referenced during intervention design and the sessions (Appendix K), with preconceived question lists helpful to bridge the practice gap in questioning practice (Delany & Golding, 2014).

Assessing Socratic responses to questioning requires a similar shift from common classroom pedagogies. The emphasis of assessment is not to judge the quality of response but rather inform the nature of question required to aid the student navigate the aporia (Schwandt, 2001). In this way responses are treated as examples of visible thought (Golding, 2019), with follow up 'spontaneous questions' used to clarify and elaborate on the held dispositions of students (Elder & Paul, 2007). Assessment becomes a means to inform the ongoing facilitation of the aporia as opposed to measuring held understandings. Thus, students should be invited to participate in assessment, utilising as a means to strengthen group and metacognitive reflection (Halpern, 1998).

A key attribute but also challenge to this form of Socratic discourse is the emphasis on a community of practice with shared goals (Tsui, 2000) and peer collaboration in hypothesis and refutation (R. Barnett, 2012) both required to promote the effectiveness of Socratic dialogue. In a meta-analysis such collaboration was found to be highly variable by pedagogical approach (Loes & Pascarella, 2017), underlining the importance that the teacher attached to constructing a group ethos for dialogue. The teacher is vital as the sole individual placed to invest time in group maintenance and redirect students' learned disposition to address answers to the teachers (Gose, 2009) and common understanding of objective (Chanock, 2000). In setting up and modelling an atmosphere concerned with the Socratic rituals rather than relative performance (Parkinson & Ekachai, 2002) and sensitively encouraging active participation among all students (Overholser, 1992), the teacher is integral to an accommodating group culture.

Design and procedure

The implementation of this model of Socratic dialogue presents a challenge as a significant amount of the session is reactive and guided by student responses to aporia. Planning was primarily focused on creating a conducive structure to ensure adherence to the pedagogy of the Socratic dialogue identified in the literature review.

The topics of the initial four sessions were planned for Cycle Two, in line with the requirements above. The required thinking skills identified in Cycle One were operationalised through specific disciplinary debates. To aid accessibility the disciplinary theme of each was connected to historical examples, connecting the reflection with their surrounding world. The disciplinary themes were identified through their presence in (Tosh & Lang, 2006), a thorough textbook supplied to students on loan via my school library, which provided a tool for students to further study topics covered in our occasional sessions. In order to avoid reported sociocultural biases in analogical examples (Chen et al., 2004), as well as foreground the role of historical evidence, real historical examples were used to frame disciplinary discourse in a more accessible format (Altorf, 2019). The selection of the historical examples was made on the basis of their lack of presence in exam board specifications to minimise the reliance on background knowledge and my own familiarity as I would be directing the dialogue. The sessions are outlined in (Appendix D).

From this initial questions and tasks were planned in advance, with the focus of the plan informed by (Neville, 1999)'s summary of considerations required for problem-based student-responsive session. In particular the plan structured opportunities to: set the climate, order main phases, identify needs of learning, and setting goals (Neville, 1999:394). Following the literature review, headline questions were identified to inform potential elenchus points. Given the follow-up questions were dependent on the student aporia these could not be planned in advance, however as outlined above a list of question objectives (Appendix G) was created and used during the sessions to assist with question

formation. Reflecting the importance of using sources to inform historical thinking (Gestsdóttir et al., 2018) the elenchus questions were frequently linked to sources, allowing me to introduce sources at particular junctures where the nature of the aporia benefitted from inclusion.

The initial session proceeded as described in the research design. The room was organised to reduce power dynamics, with the teacher and students sat around a single oval table and teacher deliberately sat away from central points. The facilitating member of staff sat opposite to evenly distribute staff members for breakout discussions. The initial session had a 15 minute lecture summary outlining the study, sessions, and nature of Socratic dialogue in order to familiarise students and set the climate. The sessions themselves proceeded according to the plan, with greater use and time spent on the aporia, and thus fewer than anticipated elenchus questions deployed.

Impact of COVID-19

As outlined above the research was terminated early, meaning the field diary covered only a fraction of planned interactions and remote collection of an adapted questionnaire was undertaken.

Given the limits imposed by remote completion, limited number of sessions, and period of stress when they were filled out it is clear the fifteen responses have validity issues. Results were far more uniform with less discrimination between identified factors, with one respondent giving the same response for all questions. There is significant variation in individual responses between the initial and remote questionnaire regardless of whether the area was covered in the session. This suggests the questionnaire was overly-demanding or lacking clarity. Only one respondent provided more than one sentence for the quantitative questions, with six eschewing it altogether. The qualitative responses tended to be tangential and of limited use for triangulation with the already problematic quantitative data. Given the likely small impact of a single session the problems presented by the compromises made to collect the data remotely are significant. I have concluded the intrinsic lack of

validity presented by these issues and the absence of a means to triangulate them effectively precludes the use of the data as an empirical measure for the purpose of findings. As outlined in the introduction, this means that the study will not present complete findings or action research cycle. Rather stands as a theoretically-elaborated 'pilot' study to inform future activities.

Discussion

As suggested by the literature, particularly of Beck, Moore, and Young the recent governmental shifts in theories of knowledge does not necessarily arm students with the full range of historical thinking. Students tended to have poorer awareness of disciplinary knowledge and modes of historical thinking beyond examinations, and were largely unaware of the broader epistemology of the discipline. Instead, forms of held historical thinking were contingent on those taught, and tended toward the methodological and recall, reminiscent of school-taught exam-indexed History. With this 'blind spot' when faced with a different academic field, such as Oxford admissions, students tended to appropriate their school-specific forms of historical thinking.

Likewise, students demonstrated an inability to place their known disciplinary modes of thinking in any form of hierarchy, suggesting a broader conceptual void around historical epistemologies among the student groups. This reinforces the arguments of Gestdottir and Wineburg for discipline-specific training of historical thinking worked through application of these forms of thinking and explicit identification.

The variation of different forms of historical thinking were broadly supported in the interviews, with the distinctions drawn from the literature informed by Seixas' categorisations proving a useful mechanism to assess thinking attributes among the university group. With the evidence of response bias among the students its utility cannot be confirmed for this group.

The responses from the university group significantly corroborated the findings of Zimdar's work, with a generally clear sense of intelligence formed around liberal educational models, with variation by individual idiosyncrasies. The group's genuinely held belief that they were examining intelligence not class was reflected in responses. However, in echoing Zimdars, Ogg, and Sullivan, there was

relatively little reflection on the basis of the definitions of intelligence, nor a particular sense of the disconnect between school and university modes of thinking. This in turn supports much of the work applying field theory to university admissions, suggesting that a gap exists between the modes of thinking of the institutionally-powerful school field and more distant Oxford-field. While not directly proven in this study it is reasonable to infer that this gap, which is the product of environment, is a contributory factor in failure to succeed in Oxbridge admissions.

The posited link to this gap, success, and socioeconomic position, based on the adapted theories of Bourdieu, are a little less firm. Students from independent schools had more support in Oxbridge admissions however this was far more mixed by school than Bourdieu suggests. Moreover, the levels of support indicated an application of time and resources, not specialism, with little evidence that beyond one department, most of these elite schools provided any specific support for historical thinking or disciplinary knowledge. Where some support was provided it rarely went beyond exhortations to read widely, suggesting a lack of emphasis or awareness of the disciplinary gap between school and university models of thinking.

In turn this meant the gap between the student groups was smaller than Bourdieu suggests. There are many reasons this could be the case. The flaws in research design, which potentially skewed Likert scale responses, may have masked the differences reflected in the interviews. Additionally, participating independent schools were not particularly renowned or competitive. This potentially suggests that the institutional habitus of independent schools is contingent on the relative financial status and culture of the school, as opposed to the school type alone. This challenges a number of studies examining field-divergence which tend to categorise all independent schools together.

Nonetheless, acknowledging the study limitations, the findings suggest students from schools with better track records of Oxbridge admissions do not hold a significantly different model of historical

thinking to those from low access. Given the limits to the data, it is difficult to conclude whether this due to Bourdieu's theory being incorrect or the posited link between congruence with university modes of thinking and success being invalid. It is potentially important that the data was collected in January-February, with some schools anecdotally reporting their Oxbridge programmes not starting until Easter. The chance that the gap is narrowed for the more well-supported students after the period of testing potentially explains the contradiction of high-access yet little reported difference, however firm conclusions cannot be reached.

Likewise, the link between historical thinking and disciplinary knowledge among the university group remains unclear, with the relative unimportance of the latter a potential product of the lack of historians who agreed to be participants. While the theory that disciplinary knowledge provides a useful framing for historical thinking stands, further investigations will have to be made in order to confirm or refute a link.

Given the early termination, direct inferences cannot be made around the efficacy of the Socratic dialogue as a means of inculcating historical thinking, and therefore no conclusions can be drawn in relation to RQ2. From the limited evidence the literature's emphasis on pre-planned structures of questions proved a helpful aid for the inexperienced to conduct a dialogue. Likewise, the emphasis on group management and conscious redefining of the teacher's role was found to be very helpful and instructive, and tentatively observed to be of use.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to elaborate and test the theory of variable episteme-congruence in Oxford applications which was suggested in (XXXXX, 2019). From this it aimed to theorise and pilot a model intervention to inform future programmes run at school and partnership level, which could in turn be used to inform outreach programmes at the University of Oxford and on a policy level at Schools Together.

The study indicated that models of intelligence and thus performance is indexed to the educational philosophies of the dominant institution. Modes of thinking among students are school-linked and not emergent from a common positivist core, with students effectively socialised into one epistemology governed by the philosophies, aims, and logistics of 11-18 education. The models of intelligence held by the university cohort remain separate to that conditioned by the students' school context, creating a gap in congruence which was hypothesised in the literature review. This is something not fully recognised by the students or the university groups, with many participants in both groups viewing their model of intelligence as self-evident. This lack of awareness potentially reduces the identification and amelioration of this interpretive gap between the university and schools. This presents a valuable topic of further research to conceptualise inequality of Oxford admissions rates.

While there are some hints that this gap is indexed to school-support the data does not exist with sufficient validity to produce firm conclusions on whether this gap is part of a mechanism of social reproduction. This is a topic worthy of further study, particularly when timed during the latter half of the Oxbridge preparation cycle where anecdotally support is strongest, and thus likely most divergent.

Given the limits placed by COVID-19 and the early termination of the study, the efficacy and impact the intervention remains unproven. Nevertheless, this study has advanced a model to address the gap in epistemes through a series of structured Socratic dialogues aimed to train university-specific historical thinking framed by disciplinary ways of knowing. Moreover, it has presented a novel and more nuanced theoretical conception of the forces which drive inequality in Oxbridge admissions, marrying disparate areas and studies in order to make sense of this under-theorised area. This theoretical framing is an essential means to crystallise the causes of this admissions inequality among less advantaged students and generate means of addressing it. By doing so it will hone and guide my further work, research, and professional practice support these students in a range of collaborative contexts.

Evaluation

7.1 Evidence collected

As outlined above, the data collected was relatively limited. In part, flaws in the questionnaire design meant that the student group data was less informative and valid. One significant issue was the relative lack of time apportioned for the qualitative questions reducing the triangulation which could have mitigated inevitable issues with the quantitative data. Moreover, the questionnaire could have utilised a more clear-sighted design in order to accommodate potential response biases and inflation of response, for example using bipolar scales in order to better construct a sense of relative importance of attributes. In addition, a performance-based test for example an essay or mock interview, could be used to examine the attributes students deploy without prompt, reducing the chance of response bias. However, this would be more complex to execute and analyse with suitable reliability.

In addition to this, due to the impact of COVID-19 and the circumstances around the early termination of Cycle Two means that the data collected beyond RQ1 is too flawed for use. This naturally had a significant limiting effect on the implications of this study.

7.2 Implications

Given the limited conclusions there are few direct actionable implications as a result of this study. Accordingly, the research has been reconceptualised as an exploratory study, with the implications primarily guiding future practitioner research in the oncoming year.

The lack of congruence in held epistemes between sample groups found in this study was strong enough to inform my collaborative practice in my professional context. Historically my workplace and partner schools have borrowed a model of Oxbridge support akin to a job-applicant, with emphasis on communication, submitted written work, and general interview skills. Knowledge, to a

degree, was viewed fatalistically as a raw ingredient to 'polish'. The shift in conception of success criteria in Oxbridge admissions as being mediated by a different episteme is vital to improve my school, and broader partnership schools' support of applicants. My findings will be used as part of an upcoming INSET for staff members at my school and a complete overhaul in conjunctions with Heads of Departments of our Oxbridge support planning. Similarly, meetings are already being arranged to share these findings with the Heads of Sixth among partner schools, with an option for similar INSET sessions as part of the broader partnership CPD programme.

7.3 Collaboration

Collaboration was built in on a school, partnership, and university level. Significant attention was paid to ensuring and reflecting the understandings of these stakeholders during the theoretical construction and execution of this study, supported by numerous meetings with colleagues and partner schools around this topic. Likewise, this study was used as an opportunity to stimulate conversation and reflection among these groups as well as university-based participants. These conversations lent heavily on the theoretical basis of the study and was used as a means to advance awareness of the potential role of episteme in Oxbridge preparation and admissions. A significant number of these conversations led to participants of various seniorities among the university group and a number of participant school Heads of Sixth request access to (XXXXX, 2019) in order to further this understanding.

Further collaboration was planned, through disseminating conclusions and models of interventions with opportunities to arrange a follow-up meeting. However due to the aforementioned limits to the study this is likely to be deferred until the future, when the cycles are fully completed.

7.4 Future plans

Greater clarity on the extent and nature of school difference on episteme formation, as well as mechanisms to close this gap, need to be ascertained. Upon the COVID-19 restrictions being reduced, my school and partnership programme will restart the intervention, making its pilot and provisional nature clear. The questionnaire will be reworked to reduce response bias effects and provide more space for quantitative responses and thus triangulation. This combined with a later starting point and successive interviews as the December interview window draws near will hopefully provide greater clarity in the school-type divergence and the impact of different mechanisms of support. Additionally, when possible the intervention design will restart following the planned structure. The resultant data and experience will provide the findings for the effectiveness of said intervention.

In addition, greater clarity in the degree of disciplinary framing in important admissions attributes identified by the university cohort would be instructive. To do so, a greater range of historians will need to be approached for their positions, given the divergence among historians in interview responses and subject-specific contexts these individuals draw upon. From this evidential base further actionable conclusions and broadcast on a policy level, through Schools Together, and the university through the same channels in which (XXXXX, 2019) was passed. With this it is hoped that the evidence will capture and further the novel and robust theoretical framing for episteme in Oxford admission that this study has advanced.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Audit of college-based outreach – using college published resources

(From Suter, 2019)

College	Outreach lead profile								Epistemic-linked provision profile			Published vision profile									Stated focus of support			Other provision			Areas of focus				
	Officer	Teacher	Access fellow	Careers advice	Professional	Lecturer	Graduate	Unknown	Shared administsiartive	Summer school	School-based Programmes	Taster Days	Informed Decision	Dispel Myths	Select the best	Aspiration	Right information	No Vision	No Page	Awareness of Ox	Applications information	Knowledge	Choosing Subjects	School Visits	Tours	Other	KS3	KS4	KS5	Teachers	Parents
Balliol College	Outreach Officer - ex teacher	1									Floreat Access Programme; 2 hub schools (selective/competitive) 6 seminars of knowledge 2 info	KS4 Taster Day - 2 lectures , PPE/Hist/Chem tatser day	y	y	y	y											Awareness/ task based	y	y		Mentioned
Brasenose College	Schools and publications (website) Officer							1	1			Language, Literature and Culture day / maths	y	y	y	y	y		y				y	y & North Yorkshire Road Show - with Cats Cambs)	y				y	y	
Christ Church	Schools Liason Officer - Dphil Linguistics and private industry / Access and Outreach Officer (junior)					1					Horizons Programme - Confidence, skills and attitudes. Acadmeic and Information - 6 sessions- tasters of individual areas and then generic skills															Information resources on various stages of app and myths	y	y	y	y	y
Corpus Christi College	Outreach Officer and Admissions Administrator								1	Ancient world residential		Ancient World Seminar Series (4 sessions).	y	y	y													y	y	y Conference	y
Exeter College	Schools Liason Officer / Undergraduate Admissions Officer							1	1									y			y			y				y	y		y
Hertford College	Outreach and Communications Officer - Junior, art and curation background					1			1			? Details									y			y (40 /15fairs)	y	Short 6 item list			y	y		
Jesus College	Access and Career Development Fellow - Lecturing 7 years / Access and Admissions Assistant						1		1		Hub school		y	y										y	y				y conference, emphasis		
Keble College	Access and Outreach Officer							1										y						y	y				y		
Lady Margaret Hall	Outreach Officer - teacher(4 months)						1					1 taster day	y				y				y					Foundation Year - disavantaged students provided with addition support						
Lincoln College	Schools Liaison Officer - higher ed transition						1											y			y	y		y	y				y		y
Magdalen College	Outreach Officer / recent gradate unrelated						1							y	y		y				y			y	y						
Mansfield College	Access Officer / recent student unrelated						1						y											y	y		y		y	y	y
Merton College	Schools Liaison and Access Officer - HE advice Ind. And Pathways admin			1									y	y	y	y	y														y

	Outreach lead profile								Episteme-linked provision profile			Published vision profile							Stated focus of support				Other provision			Areas of focus				
Officer	Teacher	Access fellow	Careers advice	Professional	Lecturer	Graduate	Unknown	Shared adminsistartive	Summer school	School-based Programmes	Taster Days	Informed Decision	Dispel Myths	Select the best	Aspiration	Right information	No Vision	No Page	Awareness of Ox	Applications information	Knowledge	Choosing Subjects	School Visits	Tours	Other	KS3	KS4	KS5	Teachers	Parents
Head of Outreach - teacher / Outreach and Communications Officer- Communications background	1									Step up - 7 sessions vague details		y	y	y	y	y			y	y			y	y					y Conference	
Outreach Officer- recent graduate						1					Several one-day subject taster days				y					y			y	y	Philosophy prize	y	y	y	y	y
Access fellow / admissions and access officer		1							Week long linked to programme	Academic Programme 8 months, knowledge focused. Use of hub schools				y	y	y				y	y	y							y	
Schools Liaison, Outreach and Recruitment Officer - recent graduate						1		1	North West Science Residential	Lewisham Programme - info based 3 sessions and 3 visits				y	y	y														
N/A																		y							Twitter account RT other events					
Access & Outreach Officer - lecturer					1													y					? 9 Student led 'roadshow'							
Outreach Officer - graduate						1			Residential NE Science				y	y						y								y	y	
N/A																		y												
Outreach Officer - recent graduate						1			NI Summer School		Women in STEM						y			y			y	y						
Schools Liaison Officer - recent graduate (notts)						1											y			y			y	y					y	y
Schools and Recruitment Programme Officer - recent graduate						1		1			3 Subject specific taster days						y		y	y		y	y	y				y	y	
Outreach Officer - Recent graduate						1			Partner with Universify week summer school				y	y	y	y			y	y		y	y	y	Primary level courses, essay prizes x 2	y	y	y	y conference and guides	
Access and Outreach Officer - recent graduate RHUL						1				Aspire Programme - one info session a year, year 12 5 x 1.5hr sessions 50:50 knowledge and information	4 dofferent subject themed study days			y	y	y				y		y	y	y	Digital platform, essay competitions x 2		y	y	y residential	
Schools Liaison - recent graduate						1						y			y					y			y	y	Philosophy essay competition					
Head of Access - Teacher/dep head of 6th / access officer	1									Residential							y			y			y			y	y	y	y	
Schools Liaison and Access Officer - ?							1				5 subject taster days						y			y		y		y	Staircase 12 - online resource, Ambassador scheme		y	y	y	
Access and Outreach Officer - teacher/NGO / Access Assistant	1								2 summer schools - 5 days - subject themed	Hub school programme - 8 sessions "taster"		y							y	y			y	y		y	y	y	y	
Admissions and Access Officer							1	1									y			y			y	y						
Totals	4	1	1	2	2	13	6	8	8	8	10	7	10	12	13	9	10	3	7	25	1	7	23	22	9	8	13	17	20	9

Appendix B: Audit of interview questions for Oxford History

Question	Substantive knowledge – decontextualized to student	Substantive knowledge – contextualised to taught/held	Disciplinary knowledge	A priori reasoning
Is it right for a historian to consider something a success or a failure?			X	X
How useful is literature in historical research?			X	X
Does the Blues count as a form of oral history			x	x
[Pictures of cotton dresses in the 18th century] What we could learn from these?				x
How can we obtain working-class history?			x	
How could rhetoricians reach people before technology?				x
What does decolonising history mean?			x	x
How can we reduce bias? What is the difference between statistical bias and emotional bias?			x	x
When have you challenged/disagreed with a book/lecture?			x	
If you could choose 3 objects to put in a time capsule to explain Jewish History, what would they be and why?		x		
Who do you think wrote this source? – source given 10 minutes before interview			x	
How do you think a new law can make a society anarchic? – from personal statement		x		x
What are some of the issues with using memoirs as primary sources? – from personal statement		x	x	x
How have historians looked at the past?			x	
Why does history change - or does it?			x	x
Why did poor people fight for the Union?		x		x
What are the different ways we can look at Gender History? – from personal statement		x	x	x
Is Simone de Beauvoir a historian? – from personal statement		x	x	x
What is the difference between political history and history that has been politicised?			x	x
As a future historian, could you use facebook and twitter as historical sources?			x	x
Can geography impact history?			x	x
How would you write female history?			x	x
Does a country necessarily need a democracy or despotic rule?		x		x
Have we lost the concept of a public and private life?		x	x	x
Can you think of any theatrical genres of history? Give an example		x	x	x
La Peste and Le silence de la Mer – discussion about how the way they're written affects the reader's attitude to the Resistance, etc		x	x	x
Should History be democratic?			x	x
How might specialisation be bad for History?			x	x
Define ideology		x	x	
What is extremism		x		
Look at this source [An enlightenment treastise on the scienfitic basis of God] is this useful?			x	x
What is literacy?				x
What are the benefits and drawbacks of empathy in understanding the past?			x	x
Can we understand purpose of political satire? – from personal statement		x	x	x
What is the difference between the past and History?			x	x
What is social history?			x	
Is the history of victims of genocide intrisnically lost? – from personal statement		x	x	x
Why might organising History into eras be a bad thing?		x	x	x
How is history 'overwhelmingly white'? - from personal statement		x	x	x
What was wrong about how you were taught the history of Nazi Germany?		x	x	x
What is the 'job' of a historian?			x	
Why don't we see often the histories of the footsoldiers of tyranny? – from personal statement		x	x	
Total	**0**	**18**	**34**	**32**

Appendix C: Interview framework

Cycle One questionnaire

Group:

School:

Identifier code:

Check understanding of study and consent prior to start of interview.

Likert Questions

How important are the following student attributes for successfully applying to Oxbridge?

Defending a point of view		A-Level knowledge	
Focus on the force which causes change		Ability to identify what makes particular events or factors significant	
Systematically thinking through historical problems		Charisma	
Questioning assumptions		Ability to think about and challenge how we do history	
A-Level grades		Getting the question correct	
Accommodating new evidence that challenges preconceptions		Knowing people at Oxford	
Knowing Quotes		Comfort not knowing things	
Evaluating the source's reliability well		Resilience	
How one dresses		Understanding the source's context	
Recall		Behaving the 'right' way	
Objectivity		Work experience	
Willingness to change one's perspective		Ability to understand and use a variety of historical perspectives	
Reading the classic works		References	
Ability to bring the narrative together as part of a broader story		Understanding and working to mitigate one's present perspective	
Challenging historical truths		Building a strong argument	
Command of the main historical facts		Approach sources as inherently flawed but still useful	
Confidence			

Qualitative Questions

What do you think the attributes of a successful student in the Oxford admissions test are?

What is intelligence in the context of History?

Why did you select these [indicate area] scores around the methodology of History ?

Why did you select these [indicate area] scores around the way we put together History ?

Why did you select these [indicate area] scores around how we question History?

Number	Focus	Title	Topics
1	Truth and knowing in History	Is History a Science?	• Epistemologies vs ontologies • The discipline • Ways of knowing • Proof and evidence • Power, negotiation, and change in History • Purpose in History • Contest and historical discourse
2	Power and writing History	History and 'neutrality'	• History as power • Change in purpose and historiography • Inequalities perpetuated by epistemologies • Elite vs democratic histories, problems and advantages • Gender, class, class and race in History
3	History as a social phenomena	The use and misuse of history	• The appeal of history • History and identity • Discursive forms and negotiation – everyday and disciplinary History • Folklores and the discipline – problems and challenges • The historian's role
4	Memory and History	Memory: past imagined or true history?	• Social memory vs History • Power, memory, and elitism • Memory and identity • The co-option of memory in History

Appendix E: Field diary framework

Field Diary Framework

Class:

Session:

How far did students achieve the session objective, if partial which parts?

Barriers identified to achieving the above

Issues or notes around topic framing

Issues or notes around questioning – both planned and spontaneous

Issues or notes around group environment – status, change, strategies

Issues or notes around assessment

Issues or notes around sources deployed

Extent to which students' reasoning indicated progression

Extent to which students' disciplinary knowledge indicated progression

Speculated reasons for both of the above

Appendix F: Clarification script for Likert scale questionnaire

Defending a point of view	*Holding to your initial argument and defending it from challenges*
Focus on the force which causes change	*The ability to identify not simply what has happened but who or what made it happen, and caused the change which led to it*
Systematically thinking through historical problems	*Working carefully through a problem, thinking about mistakes or assumptions you might be making, accommodating any issues or mistakes you may have made*
Questioning assumptions	*Ability to think about the underlying logic of your opinion or argument*
A-Level grades	*What the predicted grades show about you*
Accommodating new evidence that challenges preconceptions	*When new evidence is put to you that suggests your argument is wrong your ability to adapt the answer so the evidence now supports your position*
Knowing Quotes	*Knowing famous quotes by historical figures and/or historians*
Evaluating the source's reliability well	*Ability to understand the nature, origin and purpose of the source quickly and correctly*
How one dresses	*Whether someone dresses in a way which they come from a certain background*
Recall	*The ability to remember facts that you have learned previously*
Objectivity	*To be free of biases or agenda when you are making historical judgements and using evidence*
Willingness to change one's perspective	*The willingness to change your position on a question if you cannot support it*
Reading the classic works	*Reading the famous works of History which are well respected and/or widely read*
Ability to bring the narrative together as part of a broader story	*The ability to find a way to bring together a knowledge of a wide range of facts into an understandable and correct narrative*
Challenging historical truths	*The tendency to question and challenge ways of doing History which are frequently taken for granted*
Command of the main historical facts	*A good understanding and ability to explain the main and most important parts of History*
Confidence	*A sense of positivity and willingness to speak and discuss difficult topics with an adult in the highly stressful environment of the Oxbridge interview*
A-Level knowledge	*The knowledge and skills learned as part of your A-Level lessons*
Ability to identify what makes particular events or factors significant	*When thinking about a historical narrative the ability to pick out the most important events or forces that shape the narrative*
Charisma	*The likability and charm of the interviewee*
Ability to think about and challenge how we do history	*The tendency to think about the commonly held beliefs around history and hone or challenge them where they do not work or make sense*
Getting the question correct	*Answering the interview question correctly*
Knowing people at Oxford	*Having friends or contacts in Oxford who can speak on your behalf or help make those in Oxford aware of your strengths*
Comfort not knowing things	*How happy and able to work through problems you are when you have no idea of the answer*
Resilience	*The ability to keep on trying, even if you have got the answer repeatedly incorrect*
Understanding the source's context	*Being able to understand the wider forces and environment when a source was written and use that to understand more about the source*
Behaving the 'right' way	*Behaving in a 'proper' way, knowing the etiquette and way of presenting yourself*
Work experience	*Having work experience in History-related fields*
Ability to understand and use a variety of historical perspectives	*When understanding an event thinking about how different people at the time and today would think about it*
References	*The quality of the reference provided by the school*
Understanding and working to mitigate one's present perspective	*Understanding that your way of understanding events and the world is linked to your background and finding ways to reduce the unconscious bias that creates*
Building a strong argument	*Your interview answers are well supported and well argued*
Approach sources as inherently flawed but still useful	*The view that all evidence is biased, but can be used by historians to understand the past*

Appendix G: Question objectives

Thought encouraging questions

(Golding, 2011) – pg. 323

Table 1. Examples of thought-encouraging questions for critical thinking. The questions on the right are asked to encourage the type of thinking on the left.

Initiating	What are some questions about …?
Suggesting	What are some possible ideas about …?
	What are other alternatives?
Reasoning and elaborating	If … were true, what would follow?
	How might we explain more about …?
	What is a different way of saying …?
	What do you mean by …?
	What is an example of …?
Evaluating	Why do you think …?
	What evidence is there for …?
	What are some reasons to agree with …?
	What are some reasons to disagree with …?
Concluding	What conclusions can we draw?
	What do we need to do next?

(Elder & Paul, 1998) – all extracted from pp297-298

Question Types

Questions of purpose force us to define our task.

Questions of information force us to look at our sources of information as well as at the quality of our information.

Questions of interpretation force us to examine how we are organizing or giving meaning to information and to consider alternative ways of giving meaning.

Questions of assumption force us to examine what we are taking for granted. Questions of implication force us to follow out where our thinking is going.

Questions of point of view force us to examine our point of view and to consider other relevant points of view.

Questions of relevance force us to discriminate between what does and what does not bear on a question.

Questions of accuracy force us to evaluate and test for truth and correctness.

Questions of precision force us to give details and be specific.

Questions of consistency force us to examine our thinking for contradictions.

Questions of logic force us to consider how we are putting the whole of our thought together, to make sure that it all adds up and makes sense within a rea- sonable system of some kind.

Reflective focuses

Recognize that all thought reflects an agenda. Assume that you do not fully understand the thought until you understand the agenda behind it.

Recognize that all thoughts presuppose an information base. Assume that you do not fully understand the thought until you understand the background information that supports or informs it.

Recognize that all thought requires the making of inferences, the drawing of conclusions, the creation of meaning. Assume that you do not fully understand a thought until you understand the inferences that have shaped it.

Recognize that all thought involves the application of concepts. Assume that you do not fully understand a thought until you understand the concepts that define and shape it.

Recognize that all thought rests upon other thoughts (which are taken for granted or assumed). Assume that you do not fully understand a thought until you under- stand what it takes for granted.

Recognize that all thought is headed in a direction. It not only rests upon something (assumptions), it is also going somewhere (implications and consequences). Assume that you do not fully understand a thought unless you know the implications and consequences that follow from it.

Recognize that all thought takes place within a point of view or frame of reference. Assume that you do not fully understand a thought until you understand the point of view or frame of reference that places it on an intellectual map.

Recognize that all thought is responsive to a question. Assume that you do not fully understand the thought until you understand the question that gives rise to it.

Spontaneous Questions

(Elder & Paul, 2007) – pg 44

Spontaneous Socratic Questioning "Moves"

- Ask for an example of a point a student has made or of a point you have made.
- Ask for evidence or reasons for a position.
- Propose a counter-example or two.
- Ask the group whether they agree.(Does everyone agree with this point? Is there anyone who does not agree?)
- Suggest parallel or similar examples.
- Provide an analogy that illuminates a particular position.
- Ask for a paraphrase of an opposing view.
- Rephrase student responses clearly and accurately.

Appendix H: Summary of study

XXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXX Road

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXX XXX

XXXXXX@st-annes.ox.ac.uk

Version 1 – Dated 1/1/20

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project conducted as part of a Masters of Learning and Teaching with the University of Oxford. As a qualified teacher with responsibilities for Higher Education my dissertation project is examining how to better prepare Year 12 students for their application to study History at the University at Oxford.

The study will take place between January and July 2020, and consist of a number of questionnaires and sessions held at XXXXXXXX aimed to develop Year 12 students' understanding of History as a discipline and applying to the University of Oxford. All participants must be Year 12 students who are interested in applying for History at the University of Oxford.

The study involves three stages. The first stage involves a questionnaire and short interview examining existing understanding about applying to University of Oxford and History as a subject among participating staff and students. This will be compared to the views of stakeholders in the University of Oxford.

The second stage is an intervention which comprises of: (I) four sessions at XXXXXXXXXX which aim to align preparation strategies and understanding of History with the stakeholders at the University of Oxbridge, these are taught by qualified history teacher informed by research literature and the result from the feedback of stage one. (II) Providing students and staff with resources to help enable,

encourage and sustain directed independent development of an understanding of History as a subject.

The third stage involves providing the students with the questionnaire from stage one in order to examine progress. This will be followed by four sessions at XXXXXXXXXX which aim to align preparation strategies and understanding of History with the stakeholders at the University of Oxbridge, these are taught by qualified history teacher informed by research literature and the result from the feedback of this questionnaire. The students will be given the same questionnaire at the end of the investigation to record the effectiveness of the intervention.

The results will be included in a final dissertation completed by September 2020. The dissertation will be available at the Oxford University Department of Education library thereafter.

All activities will happen within XXXXXXX and will be covered by the school's health and safety and safeguarding protocols. All individuals involved will be employees of XXXXXXXX, have an up to date DBS check, and subject to the staff code of conduct of XXXXXXXXX. Should you wish to enquire about any of these please do not hesitate to contact me.

All data collected will be transferred to XXXXXXXXXX servers and stored behind a passworded account. All data will be anonymised on the server and all results, including school details, will be anonymised. All data will be kept with the lead investigator (myself, XXXXXXXXXX).

We provide numerous mechanisms to secure consent as each school will have its own norms, policies and priorities. All students and staff have the right to opt out at any time of the process.

A consent form is attached to this information letter for you to complete should you wish to opt in to this investigation. Please return it to myself completed should you wish to participate.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

XXXXXX

Appendix I: Consent form

University of Oxford – Department of Education

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY





XXXXXXXX
XXXXXXX, Email: XXXXXXX
MSc Student
Oxford University telephone number: 01865274024
Oxford University e-mail: XXXXXXXXX

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Approval Reference: ED-CIA-20-059

'Oxbridge 'folklores' and knowledge as capital: understanding undergraduate admissions inequality through field theory'

Purpose of Study: This research project aims to investigate the differing conceptions held of intelligence and the knowledge needed for undergraduate admissions by various stakeholders involved in the process for history admissions. This will be achieved by identifying a discipline-specific model of intelligence among admissions tutors, interviewers and managers and comparing that with the model of discipline-specific intelligence among school managers, teachers and Year 12 (competent youths aged 16-17) students. The primary function of this initial investigation is to identify the nature of the perception gap between year 12 students and their teachers and key stakeholders in the admission process.

Using data from the above an intervention will be run for year 12 students. These sessions will be focused on closing the perception gap that managers/teachers and Year 12 Students have. The specific syllabi will depend on the areas of misunderstanding identified in the initial research. It will be whole-group, classroom based and taught through a combination of direct instruction and Socratic dialogue and as such is part of standard practice in schools but informed by the above investigation. A questionnaire will be used pre and post intervention, with managers, teachers and year 12 students, to help identify the effectiveness of the intervention, which in turn will be summarised in the MSc Dissertation.

Please initial each box

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet version 1 dated 1/2/20 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.	☐
3	I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by authorised people outside the research team. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.	☐
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.	☐
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.	☐
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	☐
12 c	[if applicable] I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in research outputs **OR**	☐
12d	[if applicable] I do not wish to be directly quoted	
13	I agree to take part in the study[1]	☐

dd / mm / yyyy

Name of Participant DateSignature

dd / mm / yyyy

Name of person taking consent DateSignature

Appendix J: Perceived attributes of Oxbridge success

Attributes based on (Seixas, 2017; Suter, 2019)

Tradition One Methodology	**Tradition Two** Sense-making	**Tradition Three** Historical consciousness	**Part Two Study** Other forms of historical thinking	**Part Two Study** Decoys
Defending a point of view	Focus on the forces which cause change	Questioning assumptions	A-Level knowledge	Charisma
Getting the question correct	Understanding a source's context	Comfort not knowing things	Knowing quotes	A-Level grades
Building a strong argument	Ability to bring a narrative together as part of a broader story	Willingness to change one's perspective	Reading the classic works	Knowing people in Oxford
Evaluating a source's reliability well	Ability to identify what makes particular events or factors significant	Understanding and working to mitigate one's present perspective	Recall	Resilience
Objectivity	Ability to understand and use a variety of historical perspectives	Ability to think and challenge about how we do History	Command of the main historical facts	How one dresses
		Approach sources as inherently flawed but still useful		Behaving the 'right' way
		Accommodating new evidence that challenges preconceptions		Work experience
		Challenging historical truths		References
		Systematically thinking through historical problems		Confidence

Analytical categories for identified attributes

Category	Responses		
Memory	Recall	Command of the main historical facts	
Canon awareness	Knowing quotes	Reading the classic works	A-Level knowledge
Fit	Behaving the 'right' way	Knowing people in Oxford	How one dresses
Credentials	References	A-Level grades	Work experience
Personal characteristics	Charisma	Resilience	Confidence
Technical skills	Building a strong argument	Evaluating a source's reliability well	Objectivity
Answering	Defending a point of view	Getting the question correct	Ability to bring a narrative together as part of a broader story
Second Order	Focus the on forces which cause change	Ability to identify what makes particular events or factors significant	Ability to understand and use a variety of historical perspectives
Reflexivity	Ability to think and challenge about how we do History	Challenging historical truths	
Reflection	Questioning assumptions	Willingness to change one's perspective	Systematically thinking through historical problems
Epistemological provisionality	Comfort not knowing things	Understanding and working to mitigate one's present perspective	Accommodating new evidence that challenges preconceptions
Evidential epistemology	Understanding a source's context	Approach sources as inherently flawed but still useful	

Appendix K: Example session structure

Session Framework

Session One: Is History a science?

Disclaimer

- **Part of an action research project – explain what means**
- **Outline provisionality of evidential basis and this intervention design**
- **Locate this session within a broader array of preparation**
- **Check consent**
- **Opportunity for questions**

Questions

<u>Epistemologies vs Ontologies</u>

- Ontologies are concerned with the identification of truth, how far can we say that is our mission as historians?
    - Drill down on the specificity of truth and its impossibility in History
- If we are not an ontologically-driven subject what are we doing as historians? Are these simply folk tales?
    - Focus on drawing out a distinction between epistemologies and ontologies, and the concept of means and modes of knowing

<u>The discipline</u>

- So are we suggesting so long as we are content *we* personally are deploying an epistemologically sound mode of knowing is that fine?
    - Draw out the dual answers to this, on one hand the socially defined basis of disciplines, the other the need/nature of History to have a community of inquiry
- Why do we have a discipline emerge and are these disciplines good things?
    - Focus on drawing out relationships between definitions of modes of knowing

<u>Ways of knowing</u>

- What makes History different in its ways of knowing to say a science
    - Students will inevitably link to the scientific method, focusing on parsing out the differing epistemological positions and subject-nature distinctions which make this direct comparison uninformative

<u>Proof and evidence</u>

- Can we ever prove anything in history? If not what is the point of using evidence?
    - Focus on outlining the difference in epistemological position of the two points

<u>Power, negotiation, and change in History</u>

- Historically, history was preoccupied with so called 'maps and chaps' – why?
    - Focus on the forces and underlying concepts which shape disciplinary identity
- This started to change in the 1950s/1960s with the rise of various historical counterpoints, such as feminist history and working class history – why did the change happen then and what was the logic?
- How might these historians have shifted the ways of knowing to accommodate this?
- What governs the relative inertia or change of the discipline, ways of knowing, and evidence?

<u>Purpose in History</u>

- If all of this, the 'science' of objective history is so socially situated what is the point of this subject?
    - Focus on drawing out History's place as a social phenomena

<u>Contest and historical discourse</u>

- What is the job of a historian therefore?
    - Focus on drawing out the disciplinary interactions and not simply replications of disciplinary ideals

Disclaimer

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- **Outline provisionality of evidential basis and this intervention design**
- **Locate this session within a broader array of preparation**
- **Opportunity for questions**

Appendix L: Participating Schools

School	Type	No. of students	OFSTED Rating	Results	Catchment disadvantage	Annual Oxbridge success over past 5 years	Number of successful History applications - 5 years	Responded to follow-up questionnaire
A	Independent	3	N/A	Higher than national average, higher than LA, mediocre relative to local independent schools	N/A	3-4 (small year groups)	2	3
B	Independent	2	N/A	Higher than national average, higher than LA, higher relative to local independent schools	N/A	6-10 (small year groups)	4	1
C	Independent	2	N/A	Higher than national average, higher than LA, mediocre relative to local independent schools	N/A	2-4 (small year groups)	1	2
D	Grammar	2	Outstanding	Higher than national average, higher than LA	Low	4-8	3	2
E	State - HA	2	Outstanding	Higher than national average, higher than LA	Low – Religious	3-6	3	2
F	State - HA	1	Good	Higher than national average, higher than LA	High - Religious	7-10 (large year groups)	5	1
G	State - LA	1	Outstanding	Mediocre to national average, higher than LA	High	<1	0	1
H	State - LA	2	Good	Lower than national average, higher than LA	High	0	0	2
I	State - LA	1	Requires Improvement	Lower than national average, lower than LA	High	0	0	1
J	State - LA	1	Good	Lower than national average, lower than LA	Mixed – intake disadvantaged	0	0	0