

**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**SOCIOLOGY**

Applying Sociological Research Techniques

**B673/CS**

**PRE-RELEASE MATERIAL FOR 2011 EXAMINATION**

**This material may be given to candidates at any time  
after 1 January 2011.**

**JUNE 2011**



**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- The pre-release material may be given to candidates at any time after 1 January 2011.
- This copy must **not** be taken into the examination.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

- You **should** make yourself familiar with the case study before you take the question paper.
- A clean copy of the case study will be given to you with the question paper.
- This document consists of **12** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

## Investigation 1 – A Study by a Trainee Researcher in Liverpool 2010.

I wanted to test the statement:

***‘Children whose parents are unemployed do less well in school’***

### Introduction

Children who do well in school have learnt ‘deferred gratification’ which means they put off doing the things they want to do (their immediate pleasures) such as watching TV, to do things which will help them more in the future such as homework or revising for exams. Parents in better off families will encourage children to go to university which means less money now but higher pay later. Parents in poor families are more likely to socialise their children into ‘instant gratification’ or getting what you can now. 5

Walter Mischel, a researcher in America published a study which proved this to be true. I wanted to copy this study using non-participant observation of the children’s behaviour. I also made my study longitudinal. 10

The aims of my investigation:

- To copy Walter Mischel’s research (see appendix) to see if I get the same results
- To find out if children whose parents are unemployed have less self-control and want things instantly 15
- To see if having less self-control affects children’s success in school

### Methodology

For my primary research I used 2 methods.

#### Method 1 20

The first was a covert observation based on Mischel’s ‘marshmallow study’ in a state primary school in Liverpool. I thought it might show me whether there was a link between parental unemployment and their children’s level of social control. I studied 30 children aged six. I was able to do this because their teacher was a personal friend. She thought it was best if we didn’t tell the head teacher or the parents. 25

First I asked the children if their parents had jobs or not and I gave them different badges. This meant when they were observed I could easily compare the behaviour of those whose parents work with those who are unemployed.

Six children at a time were taken from the classroom to another room. I used toffees as all children like them. As in Mischel’s research, the children were told that if they rang the bell they could have one toffee but if they waited they would be able to have two toffees. The children were filmed so I could record and observe their behaviour. The children were not told they were being filmed; if they had known, they may have behaved differently and the results would not have been valid. Afterwards, the six children went back to the classroom and were replaced by another six until all 30 children had been studied. 35

After the study I observed the children’s behaviour which I had filmed and put onto a DVD. This was useful evidence to draw conclusions about deferred gratification. It might also be useful in the future as I could use the film to teach students!

Method 2

I continued my research by conducting unstructured interviews. I went back to the school when the children were seven. I asked the children about their families and what their career aims were. I was also given some test results by my friend, their teacher. She also gave me their names and addresses so that I could track them down later when they had left the primary school. 40

Finally I will carry out unstructured interviews with the children when they have left school. I will ask about their behaviour in secondary school to get an understanding of how hard they worked, whether they completed homework and revision or preferred to watch TV or go out with their friends. I will also find out their GCSE results and plans for the future. 45

**Findings from My Primary Research**

I think I copied Mischel's study successfully. From observing the children on video, I seem to have found a relationship between having parents who are unemployed and wanting instant gratification. 50

When asked:

- 5 children said their parents didn't work
- 12 children said their parents did work
- 13 children said they didn't know if their parents worked or not 55

When observed:

- All 5 children whose parents didn't work took the toffee and couldn't wait
- Only 3 children whose parents worked took the toffee and couldn't wait
- 9 of the 13 children who didn't know if their parents worked or not took the toffee and couldn't wait 60

**Secondary Source****Source 1**

Adapted from a study in America of 20 families, published in a journal of sociology in 1993

**The effects of parental unemployment on children's achievement in school.**

Findings: 65

- Parental unemployment has no severe effect on achievement in school.

**Conclusion**

I will be able to find out if having less self-control affects children's success in school (my 3rd aim) from the results from my unstructured interviews. I will carry them out when the children are sixteen. 70

So, have I proved that, 'Children whose parents are unemployed do less well in school'? My source 1, Mischel's study, proves it and I might find the same when I finish my interviews in ten years. However, my secondary source does not prove the hypothesis.

**Appendix**

(Background Information)

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Tuesday, May 9, 2006

Adapted from an article in 'The San Francisco Chronicle', (USA) May 2006

AROUND 1970, Walter Mischel left a group of 4-year-olds in a room with a bell and a marshmallow. If they rang the bell, he would come back and they could eat the marshmallow. If they didn't ring the bell and waited for him to come back on his own, they could then have two marshmallows. The children were observed in videos and were seen squirming, kicking, hiding their eyes – desperately trying to be self-controlled so they could wait and get two marshmallows. Some broke down and rang the bell within a minute. Others lasted 15 minutes.

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The children who waited longer went on to get higher SAT scores. They got into university and were more successful. The children who rang the bell quickest were more likely to become bullies. They received worse teacher reports 10 years later and were more likely to have drug problems at age 32.

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The Mischel study shows that young people who can delay gratification can sit through sometimes boring classes to get a degree. They can avoid drugs and alcohol. People without self-control skills fail in school and drop out. They become involved in teenage pregnancy, drug use, gambling, truancy and crime.

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Children from poorer homes (eg with unemployed parents) do much worse on delayed gratification tests than children from middle-class homes. That's probably because children from poorer homes are more likely to have their lives disrupted by divorce, violence, moving house etc. and need to think about now instead of the long term. The poor children observed wanted the marshmallow now but the middle-class children could look at the long term benefits of waiting so they would get more marshmallows.

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## Investigation 2. A Study by a Female Student Studying GCSE Sociology, in London 2009.

To find out which factor, social class or ethnicity, has the biggest effect on success in school

### Introduction

In my sociology lessons I learnt that a child's social class is very important. Those from the higher classes usually do well but children from the lower classes are more likely to fail. I also learnt that children from some ethnic minority groups do not achieve good exam results and I would like to find out if it is class or ethnic group which is most important. 5

A pupil who is from an ethnic minority group might experience racism at school and bullying. This could lead to the pupil becoming anti-school, truanting and poor behaviour in class. Teachers might adopt stereotypical views about some groups. 10

I think it is probably class which is most important. Middle class children speak well, have good manners and wear school uniform. This might lead to the 'halo-effect' in that teachers label these pupils as having a positive attitude. This could lead to the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. Middle class pupils live up to the label of being hard working but working class pupils live up to the label of being failures. 15

However, I must be aware of the need for objectivity when I collect my data.

My aims are:

- To find out the GCSE results of children of different social classes and ethnic groups
- To find out what teachers think about the different groups of pupils
- To find out if teachers treat children of different social classes and ethnic groups in different ways 20

## Methodology

I think that using a questionnaire would have been a useful method to collect information. However, I decided to observe one class and gather quantitative data.

I would like to have carried out covert participant observation in one of my classes but this would not be ethical. Instead, I will ask one of my teachers if I can do overt, non-participant observation on a class I am not a member of. I will be able to give all my attention to the observation and be able to record my findings. 25

To make recording easier, I have made up an observation grid of behaviour which I think will be important in helping me to meet my aims. I will make a tick when I observe the behaviour. 30

## Observation Grid

Pupils	WC	MC	EM	White
No pen/book etc				
Homework not done				
Distract other pupils				
Interrupt teacher				
Teacher				
Tell off				
Send out				
Refer to past behaviour				

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### Key:

**WC** – working class

**MC** – middle class

**EM** – ethnic minority

**White** – white (pupils)

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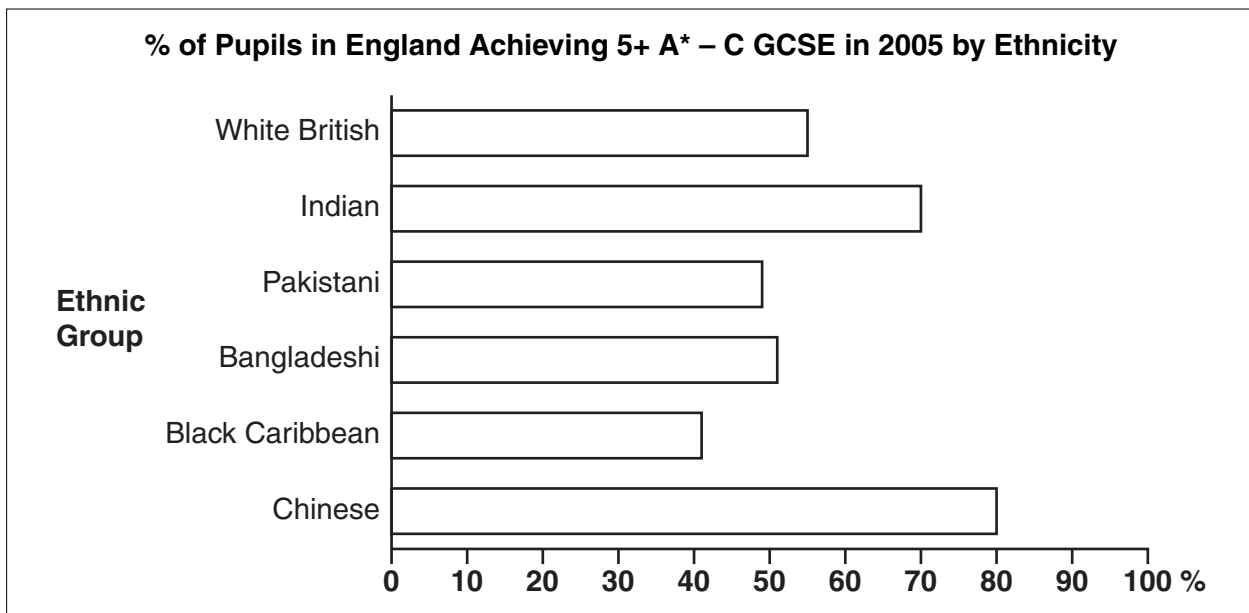
## Findings from my Observation

There were 28 pupils in the science class I observed. From my grid I found:-

- 3 pupils didn't have a pen – 1 ethnic minority boy and 2 white boys. I decided all were working class. 50
- No homework was due to be handed in that lesson.
- 4 pupils distracted others at some time in the lesson – all were white working class boys.
- 2 pupils interrupted the teacher – both were girls. One asked the teacher a question about the work. I think she was middle class.
- The teacher told off 2 ethnic minority pupils for being late. 4 other pupils were told off for not getting on with their work. I think they were all working class and were mostly males. 55
- No pupils were sent out.
- The teacher told one boy he would be suspended again if he misbehaved. He was from an ethnic minority. 60

## Secondary Sources

### Source A



Source: Adapted from Department of Education and Skills (2006)

**Source B****Ethnic groups ‘face job battle’****Unemployment among ethnic minority groups is twice the rate of white workers.**

Since 1998, the employment rate in ethnic groups has improved but only slowly.

If current trends continue it would take 46 years before employment rates among workers from ethnic minorities reaches the level of white workers.

Overall, 11% of people from ethnic minorities are unemployed compared with 5% of white workers.

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Source: Adapted from Online BBC article (2005)

**Source C****Quote from a Labour Politician**

‘We believe that all children should be able to stay in post-16 education. That’s why we introduced the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for students whose parents are unemployed or on low pay. The poorest can claim £30 per week. This will help their education in two ways:-

1. They won’t need to work in part-time jobs and can use the time to study
2. The money can pay for travel, equipment and food and without this parents could not afford to keep them in school’

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Source: Interview on TV (2007)

**Source D**

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**Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A\* – C grades at GCSE 2005/06**

Pupils with free school meals	33%
Other pupils	61%

Source: Department for Education and Skills



## Conclusion

My research shows that:-

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1. Ethnicity affects success in school.
2. Working class pupils do less well than middle class pupils in school

## Evaluation

I was disappointed that I was not able to prove that it is either social class or ethnicity which is most important; they seem to be mixed up together!

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If I had more time to study my secondary data, I think I would find that ethnic minority groups are less likely to have jobs than whites and unemployment is the cause of lack of success in school.

However, my evidence did seem to show that gender is important, so maybe that is what I will research in the future.

I could have used a questionnaire. I think this would have been useful to study pupil success in school.

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