

Read Item A and answer the question that follows:

### Item A

Interactions with teachers are a key factor in the experience of pupils in education. This is particularly the case with pupils from different ethnic groups who may be taught by teachers that have formed stereotypical views of their ethnic group. These interactions can be damaging to pupils self-esteem and their chances of achieving. The extent to which these interactions are intentionally harmful, is debatable, with some sociologists suggesting that teachers react in a range of ways to pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, having both positive and negative expectations of different pupils.

A method that is commonly used in educational research in unstructured interviews. These are able to explore topics that are difficult to operationalise and provide respondents with the opportunity to express themselves. However, the scale of unstructured interviews and the time taken to conduct them are both limitations, particularly if conducted during the school day.

Using material from Item A and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of using unstructured interviews to investigate teachers racialised expectations. [20]

As Item A states, unstructured interviews are a method commonly used in educational research. This is because they can provide researchers with large amounts of qualitative data that is preferred by interpretivists. However, there are many strengths and limitations to the use of unstructured interviews, particularly when investigating a sensitive topic such as teacher's racialised expectations of students.

One strength of using unstructured interviews is that the researcher can develop a rapport with those they are interviewing. This is an advantage when investigating sensitive issues such as racialised expectations, as

pupils who have been victim of racial stereotyping may be reluctant to talk about their experiences for fear of either not being believed or that they are exaggerating the scale of the problem. In developing a trust relationship with the pupils, the researcher can get pupils to open up about their experiences of such a sensitive topic issue. However, a limitation of using this method is that there may be status differences between themselves and the researcher. Furthermore, depending upon the gender, social class and ethnicity of the researcher, they may be perceived by the pupil to be part of the issue, particularly if they have been subjected to racialised expectations from teachers from similar backgrounds.

A strength of using unstructured interviews to investigate teacher's racialised expectations is that the researcher can ask follow-up question and probe for more detail. This is particularly relevant with a topic such as racialised expectations as for some pupils, the impact of teachers' interactions with them may not be obvious at first. Using follow-up questions will allow the researcher to fully understand the impacts on the pupil's self-esteem and experiences at school. However, critics may argue that this leads to researchers making subjective interpretations and could cause leading questions to be asked which could in turn, impact negatively on the validity of the research.

A limitation of using unstructured interviews with teachers when investigating racialised expectations is that they may employ methods of impression management. As the topic of racialised expectations is highly sensitive, teachers are unlikely to disclose their true motivations as it could have impacts on their career, and so would be more likely to give socially desirable answers and this may impact on the validity of their responses. However, a strength of using unstructured interviews in this instance would be that researchers can monitor body language for signs that the teacher is being untruthful or could ask further questions to uncover their true feelings on the issue.

A further limitation of using unstructured interviews to investigate racialised expectations would be the willingness of teacher to take part. When investigating racialised expectations, Mirza found resistance to her research from various teachers, including verbal abuse from teachers when asking them to clarify points made. Furthermore, headteachers, acting as gatekeepers, may be reluctant to allow researchers to access teachers and pupils, as if the research found the presence of racialised expectations in the school, this could have negative consequences and could result in

parental complaints or negative publicity. However, researchers should address this issue by ensuring confidentiality of responses and anonymity both the institution and those taking part in the research.

In conclusion, the use of unstructured interviews to investigate teacher racialised expectations is beneficial in that it might uncover the reasons for racialised expectations and the impacts of these on pupils and prompt further research or policy changes. However, the information gained lack reliability, as it is unlikely to be replicable, given the nature of the interviews. Furthermore, the small-scale nature of the research would not lead to developing large-scale changes across society, but rather minor changes to the way in which individual schools tackle the issue of racialised expectations.