

## Education 110: Teaching and Learning

### Listening Project Assignment

**Essential Questions:** Are schools sites of social reproduction or social transformation? What do young people know about an important school/social issue, and how did they come to learn it?

**Task:** You will have a *listening conversation* with two young people between the ages of 4-18, to find out what they know about a particular social issue of your choosing and how they have come to that understanding. You will use their insights in addition to course readings to provide an analysis of the essential questions. You will complete the project in groups of 3 or 4. There are both individual and group work tasks.

#### **Steps of this Process:**

1. Your group will decide collaboratively on the following:

- The age or grade span of the young people you'll converse with for this project (e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> graders, children who are 8-10 years old). You can pick any young person within K-12.
- A specific **topic** and **question** that will be the focus of your *listening conversation* around a school/social issue. This discussion should not only center on the issue, but how this issue's impacts vary depending the group of people. Groupings can be based on major identity categories we are often socialized into (or an intersection of several): race, class, sex, gender, ability, religion, socio-economic status, citizenship, and age (youth or elderly), and how that socialization results in advantages and disadvantages regarding this particular school/social issue? Who is advantaged/disadvantaged, and how?
  - The topic of your choosing should be specific. That said, all school issues typically do not manifest solely in school, they are nested in the wider society. And, many out-of-school social issues find their way into schools in some way. In other words, where in schools do we see society's oppression/socialization processes reinforced or transformed? Are schools sites of social reproduction (reproducing the same patterns of thinking and behaviors) or social transformation (dismantling/change harmful patterns of thinking and behaviors)?
  - Some school-based examples that often create issues:
    - Gender-neutral bathrooms: Should schools have them?
    - school safety: Is your school safe? What makes a school safe?
    - tracking students in basic, honors, gifted/AP classes: Should schools divide students based on academics?
    - discipline system: Is this system fair? Does this system work?
    - dress codes: Are they necessary? Are they fair?
    - school dances/extra-curriculars: Are these experiences inclusive?
    - curriculum that misrepresents or ignores large groups of people (marginalization) or advances narrow narratives about the United States (military/foreign policy; labor relations; civil rights; Native Americans; specific federal holidays like Columbus and MLK Jr. days; women; etc.): Does the curriculum promote a variety of perspectives? Is it relevant to the study body?

- others ideas?

2. Each person will meet with at least two young people for **approximately 10-20 minutes**. Tape-record your *listening conversation* and transcribe the tape afterwards, word for word. You will bring these transcripts into class to share with your peers (or share using Google Drive)

3. When sharing transcripts, group members will reflect on their experiences, wonderings, and learnings. You will be looking for trends in and across transcripts and unique/powerful insights. This will be a group analysis exercise in which individuals can use others' transcripts in support of their own papers.

4. Each person will produce either a 4-5 page written paper **or another format to be discussed**, examining what they have learned from this experience about what young people seem to understand about your selected topic and how they have come to know it. There is also a reflective aspect to the project in which you are asked to think about your role in the listening conversation. More details below.

### **More Specifics about the Listening Conversation**

#### **The Interview**

**Prior to your conversation** you must get **permission from parents/guardians/caregivers** prior to talking with any young person for this project. This is not true for 18+ year old interviewees, who can consent without parental involvement. This can be done via email, text, or in-person signing of a waiver form and should be included as an appendix to your final paper. You can share this assignment sheet so that they get a sense of the assignment requirements. In addition, make clear that you will use pseudonyms in the project and that your results will only be shared in ED110. The permission should be submitted with the final project.

**During the *Listening Conversation*:** Begin with some welcoming conversation, introducing yourself, sharing information about your questions and how their answers will be used, and ultimately, letting the learner know that you're **curious to hear what they know**.

**Then, begin with some of the suggested questions below. Make them your own. You should develop your own set of questions prior to the interview.**

- *What do you know about (the topic you chose)?*

Follow up with open-ended question(s) that invite the learner to expand further, such as:

- *How do they identify themselves?*
- *Can you tell me more about that?*
- *What else do you know about that?*
- *When and how did you learn about that?*
- *Where do your ideas come from?*
- *Why do you think this issue causes conflict?*
- *What personal experiences about the topic did you or others you know have?*
- *What have you seen in schools that illustrate this topic is an issue?*
- *Why is this topic important to know?*
- *What can be done to help improve this issue?*

Sometimes young people need visualizations to help trigger ideas. You could ask students to draw a picture that represents the topic you are investigating and then have them talk about what they drew and why. And/or, you could bring a visual aid or other materials to help instigate conversation about the topic. These issues also come up in media (movies, cartoons, tv, comic book, video games, etc...). You might use some of those forms of media as a way into the conversation as well.

Your questions are not meant to be a test for information nor a time for you to teach a lesson on your topic. Your primary focus is to ask questions, listen, and ask more questions in order to gain real insight into interviewees' perspectives.

#### **Transcribing the *Listening Conversation*:**

- Type the *listening conversations*, word for word, including your questions and responses.
- Include an introduction with a brief overview: name of student (**use pseudonym**), age, how and where the "listening conversation" took place.
- Bring **3-4 copies** of your typed written transcript to class with you: one for each group member.

#### **Final Project Guidelines:**

Please write a 4-5 double-spaced (12-point Time New Roman, 1 inch margins) page essay or develop another format with consultation with your instructor. Respond to the following questions:

Introduction/Thesis Statement: What do your interviewees seem to understand about the causes and impacts of your selected issue? Based on your interviews, what can you say about schools (based on what you are hearing in the interviews) being sites of social reproduction or transformative?

#### Analytical Remarks That Support Thesis Statement:

##### **1. What is the issue under study? The Literature Review**

- You are trying to grasp if those interviewed see and understand the social issue—what it is, its causes and consequences on themselves, others, and institutions that touch their lives. Therefore, it will be important for *you* to have a strong grasp of our course readings for this unit around identity, cycle of socialization, and how schools and other important influencers can shape how one thinks and acts.
  - Read 1-3 articles on the topic (include citations in a reference section; APA or MLA are both acceptable). Incorporate this research into the paper in some way. The goal of this is to be able to **define your topic** and **discuss its causes and consequences as it plays out in and outside of schools**. For example, if you choose to have students examine how dress codes can be sexist, you should read a few articles helping you understand that topic more: What are dress codes and why do they exist? What is the problem with them? What are the benefits, if any?

- You now have developed a sufficient definitions of your topic and ideas that will support the evaluation/analysis of interviewees' comments.
2. **Data Analysis: What do students seem to understand about the investigated topic, and how did they come to know/learn it?** Look for trends and unique ideas in your data for this question and consider how they connect to what you learned in your literature review/course readings Those trends/unique ideas should help organize the body of your paper.
- When you shared transcripts in your group, what similarities and differences did you notice in the students' responses? Please be specific. What do those similarities and/or differences mean to you?
  - Ultimately, you are trying to assess if your interviewees understand how they are being socialized around this particular issue. Use **Goodman** (do these interviewees express in anyway that this issue relates to privilege and oppression) and **Harro** (how is behavior/attitudes around the issues shaped) to help explain your interviewees' responses. This means making specific reference to terms or ideas in these two texts to support your analysis of what your interviewees said and what you think it means. Remember, the essential question of this project is if these interviews help you to understand how schools can be sites of social reproduction and social transformation.
3. **Personal Reflection Section of the Project:**
- Discuss your positionality with this issue.
    - What relationship do you have to the issue, and how did your own socialization contribute to this relationship/understanding?
  - How might this experience have strengthened your own understanding of yourself and your relationship to others, especially as an emerging educator? Use the assigned readings of **Heshusius (1995)**, **Minor (2019)**, and **Paley (1986)** to support this reflection. You might consider:
    - How good of a job did you do listening to the youth you conversed with?
    - Minor (2019) asks, for example, "Because of what I've heard, how can I make active and longstanding adjustments to my classroom community, to my actual teaching, and to who the department, grade, or school operates?"(p. 17) In other words, what ways did you challenge yourself and others in your group to think about the ways our education systems responds to our young people?
    - What questions are you left wondering about?
  - In what ways has this project challenged, reinforced, or greater deeper understanding of your educational philosophy?

### **Grading Criteria**

- See rubric in Canvas' assignments for the Listening Project.