

## Interview Protocol for Exploring Youths' Interest-Related Pursuits

### Interview Topics

- Learn if and how youth see their interest-related pursuits are preparing them for imagined futures in one or more of the following domains: play/fun, school/education, work/career, civic engagement.
- Learn if and how young people have formed new connections with others that have helped them in their interest-related pursuits, and their perceptions of how other people can potentially help them in the future.
- Learn what kinds of disruptions or frustrations young people have experienced in sustaining interest-related pursuits across settings (spatial boundaries) or over time (temporal shifts)
- Learn about the ways that participation in interest-related pursuits has (or has not) transformed over time (e.g., changes in roles over time).

### How to Approach this Interview

- Begin by considering which questions are most important for your own goals for research or evaluation.
- You should plan on 45 minutes of interview (1 hour total)
- Ask a question, and be willing to tolerate silence. The more you wait for a response, rather than “filling in the silence” with your own talk, the more you will learn from your interviewee about their experiences. Remember not to evaluate answers or interrupt the flow of the interview.
- Guiding interview philosophy: Stick to the script, but do ask follow ups so that you are sure they are giving you concrete details. For ideas and experiences central to our research questions, we want more than a gloss of people’s experiences, but details about the who, when, where, why, and how of key events and definitions of key concepts they introduce. For example:
  - “I care about social justice.”
    - *What does that term, social justice, mean to you?*
  - “We work on issues that matter to the community.”
    - *Can you give me an example of an issue you’re working on?*
  - “I learned how to speak up and make a change.”
    - *Can you tell me a story about when you spoke up?*

### Preparation checklist

- \_\_\_ Review study talking points/Script (next page) and the full protocol; prepare to be able to briefly summarize the main purpose of the study.
- \_\_\_ Make sure the interviewee has given consent to be interviewed (and parents have given consent if under 18).
- \_\_\_ Audio device is working and you have ample battery power.
- \_\_\_ You have a digital copy of interview protocol to share with the youth if they are curious.

## Script

Thank you for taking time to talk with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your interests, your experiences in [NAME OF PROGRAM], and your thoughts about your future.

We asked you to participate in this interview because we would like to understand more about the your experiences and interests.

This research is important because youth experience pathways into adulthood in many different and important ways, but researchers do not understand it very well. I'm asking you to talk with me because not enough researchers hear from young people themselves. I want to hear about your experiences.

Let me suggest a few ground rules:

- There are no right or wrong answers. Please say whatever is on your mind, the good and the bad. You are the expert and we are learning from you. Please tell me if a question is unclear.
- This interview is confidential. Confidential means that I won't use your real name in any published reports that come out of this. We will use your organization's name in published reports, just not the real names of individual people. I will not share the interview transcript with anyone in your organization.
- There is one exception if you are under 18: If, during the interview, you say anything about someone hurting you or you planning to hurt someone else, then I/we will have to tell someone else about it.
- I would like to tape record this discussion. Only the research team will hear the interview. Is it ok with you for me to tape this conversation? [wait for answer] If there's anything you don't want to record we can shut it off.

Before I start, do you have any questions?

## Interview Questions

### ***Focal Activity and Purpose/Reason for Participation***

*Purpose of section: Understand the young person's participation in an interest-related pursuit in depth, including how their involvement has changed over time.*

- Tell me about about an activity that you enjoy and get better at the more you engage in it. What is that activity?

“First, we want to get a picture of what [activity] looked like when you first started doing it.”

- Think about when you got started with [activity]. (pause) Tell me about your first experiences with [activity]. What did it look like? (ask for an example)
- About what grade were you when you got started? (Alternate wording: About how old were you when you started?)
- How did you get started? (if not already stated) Why did you get started? (probe for motivation: What was your motivation or reason for engaging in [activity]?)
- Where did you do this activity?
- When you first got started, in a typical week, how often did you pursue the activity?

- How did you feel about doing [the activity] when you first started?
- When you started doing [activity], how would you describe your skill level? [Probe: What parts felt easy, like you were prepared to do? What parts did you need to learn how to do?]

“Now we want to get a sense of how you are currently involved in this activity.”

- Tell me about your current experiences with this activity: Walk me through a typical day when you are engaged in this [activity]. [*Possible probe: What might I see you doing, if I were to tag along while you were doing [activity], who else is involved? Probe for types of participants, including whether friends were part of the activity? Who was in charge of the activity?*]
- Who is involved in the activity now? What is your role or contribution to [activity] now? How is your contribution the same as when you started? How is it different?
- What’s similar about your experiences now to when you first started? What’s different?
- In what ways have you become better at this activity? (What’s changed about how you do the activity?) How do you know?
- It sounds like you’ve continued this activity for [X] years. What motivates you to keep doing this activity? How have your reasons for doing [activity] changed since you started?
- Where do you do [activity] now?
- Can you think of any examples of getting paid for pursuing this activity? (Tell me about it)
  - Have you tried to pursue [activity] outside of [organization]?
- How often are you doing [activity]?

### **Obstacles**

*Purpose: To develop understanding of what gets in the way of young people engaging in the activity (access issues) and how young people overcome or are hindered by obstacles in the activity (within activity issues).*

- Think about a time when you were not able to do [activity] or you faced challenges trying to do [activity]? Why was it difficult or challenging to do [activity]?
- Now, think about when you were doing [activity] but you faced an obstacle or a challenge while doing [activity].
  - What was the goal you were trying to accomplish? What was the challenge/obstacle? How did you overcome whatever was in the way? Who if anyone helped you overcome the obstacle? How did they help?
  - Now, tell me about a time when the obstacle was too great, and you couldn’t accomplish your goal. FIRST: What was the goal you were trying to accomplish? What was the obstacle? What about the obstacle made it difficult to overcome?
- For people experiencing trouble finding paid work in that area, what might be some of the challenges or barriers?
  - What might help people to overcome those challenges?

### **Networks and Separations and Linkages**

*Purpose of section: Develop a sense of personal networks of people who know about, support, or hinder involvement in the activity.*

- In general, who, if anyone, supports your involvement in [activity]? [*Probe for different forms of support: Encouragement, drives me to activity, helps pay fees for classes*]
- Who or what, if anyone or anything, gets in the way of your involvement in [activity]? Is there anyone who doesn’t want you to participate in [activity] or that you participate in [activity] too often? If so: Why don’t they want you to participate?

- Who, if anyone, has helped you get better at [activity]?
  - What does [person] do to help you get better?
  - Is this someone you knew before, or did you meet them through participating in [activity]?
- Are there people or places you go where you don't want people to know about your involvement in [activity]? If yes, who are they or what are those places? Why is it important that they don't know about your involvement in [activity]?

### ***Imagining possible futures***

*Purpose of section: To understand what ideas young people have gotten through participation in the activity about who they could become or what they could do in the future.*

- As a result of engaging in [activity], have you gotten any new ideas about things you might want to do in the future? [Prompt, if needed: It could be something you want to do as a hobby (like a sport), for school, for work, or to make the world a better place.]
  - What is one new idea you have gotten? How did you come up with that idea?
  - (if no) - can you think of specific jobs [paid work] this might be preparing you (or other young people like you) for?
  - (pick one job or activity) - Do you know anyone who is already doing [future activity]? Please tell me about it.
- Imagine yourself five years into the future, and you are doing that [new idea]. What are some things you think you will need to learn or do, to be that person doing [new idea] in the future?
- What have you already learned or done that prepares you to become that person doing [new idea]?
- What kinds of things might get in the way of you accomplishing your future goal?

### ***Affinity Group Membership***

*Purpose of section: To develop understanding of youths' identification with others who engage in the activity.*

- Have you become a member of any groups that do [interest-related pursuit] since starting to engage in that activity?
  - If yes:
    - What group is that?
    - What are some things people in this group do?
    - Have you participated in any activity or event with that group?
    - How do you feel about being part of this group?
    - Are you part of any online communities that relate to [activity]?

Do you have any last questions for me?

**Thank you for your time!**