



Churches Engaging Young People Project: Young Person Interview Protocol

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CEYP Stage Two Interview Protocol: Young Person Version

Instructions for Interviewer:

1. *Introduction:*

- a. “Hi, (*participant’s name*), this is (*interviewer’s first name*) from the Fuller Youth Institute. Is this still a good time for a 60-minute interview?” *If not, reschedule.*
- b. “Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. Just in case our call gets disconnected for some reason, please call back to this same number and we can continue the interview.”
- c. “The purpose of this study is to understand what churches are doing that makes them effective with young people, ages 15-29, so we’re talking about teenagers and young adults. Over the next hour, I would like to have a conversation with you about your [church]. Since our study includes multiple Christian traditions and denominations, I want to make sure I use the term you’re most familiar with when I refer to your [church]. Is there a different term that you prefer, such as parish or congregation?” (*Where you see [church] below, use language that is preferable to the interview participant, such as “parish” [Roman Catholic], “church” [Protestant], or whatever term they use/prefer, such as “community of faith”*).
- d. “Your [church] was selected for this study because of its effectiveness with young people. In our conversation, I would like to better understand your [church] and what it does, as well as why young people attend, how it helps them grow in their faith, and why you believe the [church] has an effective ministry to young people.” (*If the person asks what we mean by “effective,” you can give a brief explanation that it includes several different factors. Rates of attendance, faith maturity, and the way the church does ministry were all given consideration. If they want more*

explanation, tell them we can send more information after the study, and make a clear note that we need to do so).

- e. “Everything you say is confidential, as explained in the informed consent you signed electronically.”
 - f. “For the questions I will ask, there are no right or wrong answers. I really want to know your honest thoughts and feelings about the [church].”
 - g. “You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time, just let me know.”
 - h. “Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions?” *If you do not know the answer to the question, offer to find out the answer, and ask if they would like to have that question answered before beginning the interview. If the answer is yes, reschedule.*
2. (As you begin, say): “I am now going to begin recording the call. There may be a few seconds of silence while I do this, and then you will be asked to press 1 to approve the recording. Are you ready?”
- a. *Once the recording has begun, say:* “For the sake of our research team only, so we can identify the recording, could you please state your name and your [church]’s name?”
 - b. “Just to confirm, do you still consent to participate in the study and to have the interview audio-recorded?” *If not, thank them for their time, and end the call.*

Demographic Questions:

1. First, I’m going to ask a few questions about you.
 - a. To begin, could you please tell me your age?
 - b. For the recording, please state if you are you male or female.
 - c. Do you have children?
 - i. *If YES:* How many and what ages?

Church Involvement Questions:

Now, I'm going to ask some questions about your involvement with the [church].

Reminder for interviewer: If the participant asks for clarification on a question, rather than offering additional explanation, ask them to explain how they understand the question, and answer based on that. For example, say, "How do you understand it?" or "How would you explain it?"

1. If you have a job title or volunteer role at your [church], what is that title or role? *(For example: Lead Pastor, Elder, Children's Ministry Volunteer, Worship Director, etc.)*
2. For how many years have you been involved with this [church]?
 - a. *If participant says "my whole life" or "since starting college," ask how many years that is.*
3. Okay, I'd like to understand a bit more about your involvement. On average, do you attend worship services at your [church] multiple times per week, once per week, twice per month, once per month, or less? *Roman Catholics might be more familiar with the term "mass" instead of "worship service." Feel free to offer that clarification if it seems helpful.*
4. Other than the worship service, what are two other areas, programs, or ministries of the [church] you're active in right now? *(If the participant uses a name for a ministry, such as "Fusion," ask them to clarify if it is a Bible Study, service group, worship service, etc.)*
 - a. On average, do you participate in each of these multiple times per week, once per week, twice per month, once per month, or less?
5. Imagine you were describing your [church] to a Christian friend. In a few sentences, how would you describe the [church]?

6. What would you say keeps you involved in this [church], rather than going to another [church] or no [church] at all?
7. To clarify, did you attend this [church] while you were in high school?
 - a. *If Yes:* I want you to think back to your time at the [church] while you were in high school. Can you think of 1 or 2 moments or experiences that really stick out that were formative or important to you? They could be hard moments or good moments. Please describe them.
8. Now I want to ask you a two-part question about busyness and stress. First, would you say your [church] adds to your busyness, or lessens your busyness?
9. Would you say your [church] adds to your level of stress, or lessens your level of stress?
 - a. I wonder if you can tell me more about that? (*If the respondent asks for clarification, add*): How does your [church] add to or lessen your level of stress?
10. Now I'd like to ask some questions that focus more on your [church] itself. Our understanding is that your [church] is effective with young people, ages 15-29. What is it about your [church], in your opinion, that makes it effective with this age group?
 - a. *Ask as a follow up, if the participant does not go into much detail:* Are there one or two specific programs, ministries, or people in your [church] that stand out that might account for this effectiveness?
 - b. Can you tell me a story that would illustrate the way your [church] connects with young people?
11. In this study we are looking at 3 specific age groups: high school age, post-high school or college age, and 24-29 year olds. Is your [church] equally as effective with those in high school, post-high school or college age, and 24-29 year olds, or is it more effective with some of these groups than others?

- a. If the answer is “more effective with some age groups than others”: Why do you think it is more effective with some age groups as opposed to others?
12. Now, thinking again about all young people, ages 15-29...What are one or two ways young people contribute to your [church] and make it better?
13. If you could change one or two things about your [church], what would those things be and why?
14. Do you know any young people who have chosen to leave your [church], not counting those who have moved away?
 - a. *IF YES:* Have they told you why they left, or if not, why do you think they left?
15. Of your five closest friends who live near you, how many attend this [church]? (*If the participant asks what we mean by “friend,” ask them to define it themselves and then answer based on that.*)
 - a. *If the number is less than five, ask:* How many of these friends who do not attend your [church] attend another church?
16. Do your parents attend this [church]?
 - a. And just to clarify, are your parents married?
 - i. *If not:* Do either of your parents attend [church] elsewhere?
17. Outside of your [church], are there any other Christian ministries or programs in which you have been, or are now, actively involved?
 - a. *If Yes* – Please briefly describe which ones?

8 Characteristic Questions:

1. Now I’m going to state several characteristics that may describe your [church]. After each statement, please rate on a scale of 1-5 how true this statement is of your

[church] overall. 1 means not at all true, 3 means generally true, and 5 means completely true. If it's something you're not familiar with, or that you do not want to answer, you can also say, "I'm not sure." Once we've gone through all of the statements, you'll have a chance to comment on some of your ratings. Do you understand the instructions, or is there something I can clarify? As a reminder, your responses are confidential. So again, on a scale of 1-5, how true is it that your church...

(Be sure to write down the participant's rating for each statement so you can ask about them at the end. Also, if the participant asks or is confused, you can clarify that these questions generally refer to the overall church, and not just young people).

- a. ...emphasizes social justice or serving others in need.
- b. ...has a strong sense of community that is marked by close relationships.
- c. ...helps people from different age groups get to know each other.
- d. ...works closely with parents to deepen the faith of children and teenagers.
- e. ...effectively equips people to grow as followers of Jesus Christ.
- f. ...has leaders who are highly capable in their responsibilities as church leaders.
- g. ...has leaders who share openly the reasons behind the decisions they make.
- h. ...intentionally develops people to be leaders.
- i. ...teaches people how to interact with cultural and societal issues.
- j. ...equips people to follow Jesus in their job, at school, or the other daily activities of life.
- k. ...teaches people to take a gracious posture when they disagree with others.
- l. ...helps people understand that faith is about more than behaviors or following rules.
- m. ...helps people know and understand the gospel, or "good news," of Christianity.
- n. ...has engaging worship services. *For Roman Catholics, it might be helpful to replace "worship services" with "mass."*

- o. ...makes young people, ages 15-29, a priority.
2. *For the two highest rated areas above, ask the participant:* Okay, because I really want to understand the great things going on at your [church], could you please provide an example or story that illustrates this characteristic in your [church]?
 - a. *If the participant has five or more that are rated with the highest score, divide those characteristics into two groups. For each of the two groups, ask:* “Of the characteristics that you rated highly, are there two that stand out above the others that your [church] does particularly well? The ones you rated highest include (*state the appropriate characteristics*). Then ask for an example or story, using the question above.
 3. *For one of lowest rated areas above, ask the participant:* I also really want to understand where you think your [church] could improve. Could you please provide an example or story that illustrates why you think this is not one of your church’s strengths?

Belief and Faith Practice Questions:

Now I’m going to ask a few questions about your beliefs and your faith practices. As I said earlier, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. Please name up to three things you do that most help you grow in your faith. (*If the participant is confused by the question, you can rephrase:* “Can you tell me about two or three habits, practices, or disciplines that help you grow in your faith?”)
 - a. How often do you engage in each of these?
2. In a few sentences, how would you describe the central message of the gospel, or good news, of Christianity? (*If the participant seems overwhelmed by the question, or is rambling, feel free to say:* “As a reminder, I’m not looking for a right answer or a long and detailed response. I really want to know what you think is most important.”)

3. Think of any adult from your [church] who has had a positive influence on your life, especially your faith journey. Could you please tell me more about that person and why they had such an influence on you?
 - a. *IF THE ABOVE ADULT IS NOT THE YOUNG PERSON'S PARENT:* I'd also like to understand more about your parent's influence on your life. What are a few ways in which your parents have impacted your faith journey?
 - b. *IF THE ABOVE ADULT IS THE YOUNG PERSON'S PARENT:* Is there an adult outside your family who has had a positive influence on you at church? Could you please tell me more about that person and why they had such an influence on you?

4. Now I'm going to read several statements that may describe you and your faith. Please tell me how true these statements are of you, on a scale of 1-5. 1 is not at all true, and 5 is completely true. How true is it that you:
 - a. ...regularly participate in worship with others.
 - b. ...take time to read and study the Bible.
 - c. ...take time for individual prayer or other practices that connect you with God.
 - d. ...make decisions and act in ways that are shaped by your faith.
 - e. ...talk openly with other Christians about your faith questions or struggles.
 - f. ...talk about your faith with others who are not Christians.
 - g. ...respond to current social issues in light of your faith.
 - h. ...serve others in need locally and/or globally.
 - i. ...see your faith as an influence in your friendships.

Additional Demographic Questions:

1. Okay, changing direction a bit, now I have a few additional questions about you:
 - a. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (*For example, high school, some college, college graduate, etc.*)

- b. Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?
- a. What race or ethnicity do you consider yourself? (*For example: White, Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Other*)
- b. Would you say your household income is far below average, below average, average, above average, or far above average compared to your perception of the national norm? (*If person asks for clarification about 'household income,' tell them: "If you consider yourself financially dependent on your parents, please answer based on your parents. If you consider yourself financially independent, please answer based on your own income."*)

Conclusion:

We're almost finished with the interview, and I have just a couple of final questions for you.

1. What else, if anything, do you want us to know about your [church] and why it is effective with young people that we may be missing or may not have asked?
2. *Note to interviewer: If there are any recurring themes that have come up or areas of the church that especially stand out, take this opportunity to ask final appropriate follow up questions here if time and the mood of the conversation allows.*
3. Do you have any other questions?
4. Those are all the questions that I have for you. Thank you so much for your time on the phone today, and for sharing about your [church]. Be assured that your identity will remain confidential as explained in the informed consent you signed. Also, in the next few weeks, we will send the gift card you selected to the e-mail address you provided. Have a great day!