

CORNELL YOUTH IN SOCIETY PROGRAM



Cornell University

Life Stories

Youth Workbook



Name

Credits

Life Stories is phase 1 of the **Community Mobilization for Mentoring Youth** project. Support was received from the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cornell Cooperative Extension Hatch and Smith Lever funds, respectively, from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and funds of the College of Human Ecology, Cornell University. Mary Agnes Hamilton, Family Life Development Center is PI; Co-PIs are Stephen Hamilton, Human Development; Davydd Greenwood, Anthropology; and Thomas Hirschl, Development Sociology.

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Why *Life Stories*?

Youth will learn how to engage adults in telling their *Life Stories*. Youth work in teams to interview adults who interest them, and create products (such as articles or pod casts) to communicate what they learned to others. *Life Stories* is phase 1 of the **Community Mobilization for Mentoring Youth**. This project will increase opportunities for youth and adults to work together on common goals. In phase 2, youth and adults will assess and develop *Community Action Plans* to increase opportunities for youth and adults to work together. Phase 3 opens an array of *Community Opportunities*, such as service learning (see Guides), jobs, internships, and training.

These opportunities for youth and adults to work together toward common goals will encourage mentoring relationships to develop naturally. Youth who have natural mentors (i.e., not in a mentoring program) are more likely to enter higher education. The **Community Mobilization** project will open opportunities to all youth to contribute to their communities' vitality and to reflect on and pursue their goals, especially via higher education or training.

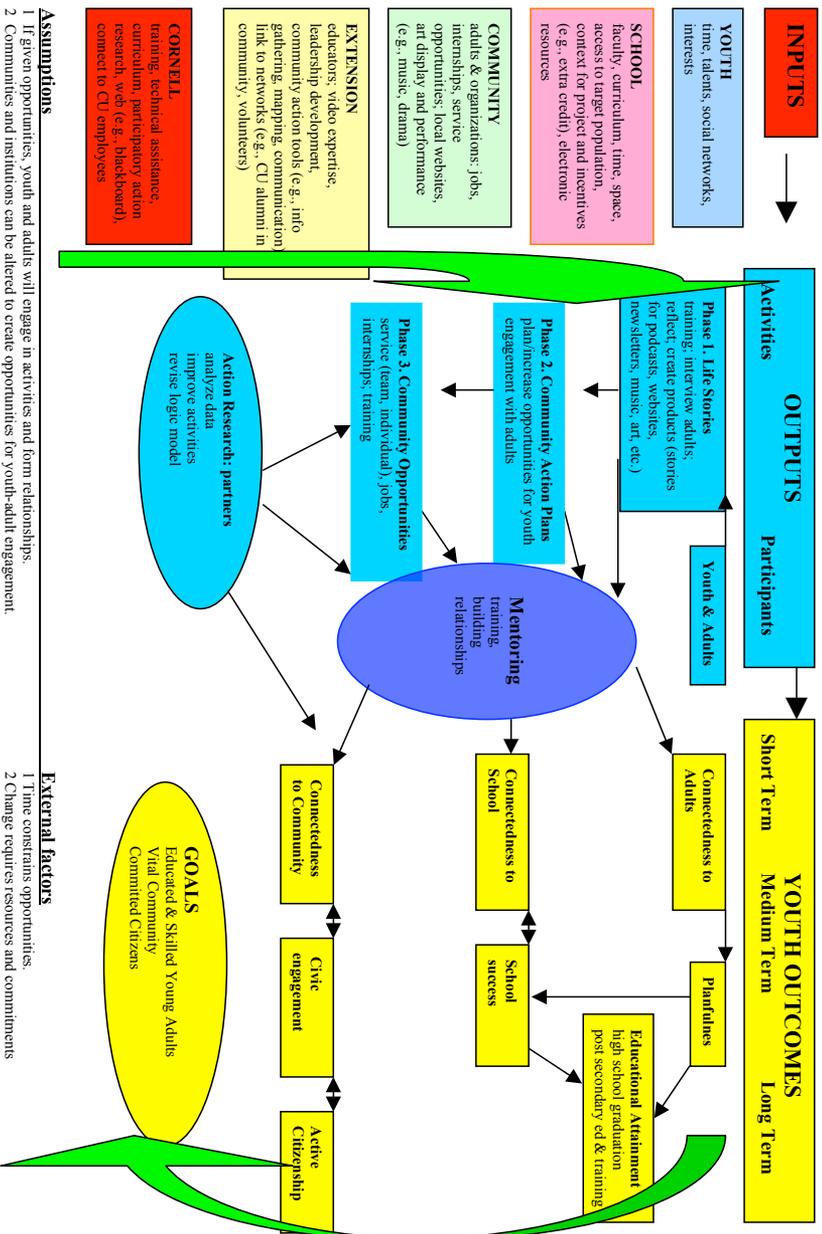
In turn, the project will increase the youth development capacity of adults and of community organizations, specifically by building opportunities for: supportive relationships, sense of efficacy and mattering, and skill building (see *Logic Model*). It will create new opportunities to promote youth development, especially connectedness to adults, school, and community; civic engagement; and planfulness. We will

simultaneously develop and test a program, conduct evaluation research on the program itself, and conduct basic research on how natural mentoring relationships form and foster youth development, and how to mobilize communities.

The project is based on the hypothesis that youth are more likely to make and follow rewarding life plans, succeed in secondary school, and engage in their communities when they have opportunities to work alongside adults to learn about their communities, make plans and take action to improve them. Such goal-directed activities are optimal for fostering natural mentoring relationships. By interviewing adults and then creating and communicating their life stories youth will simultaneously learn about how adults have made satisfying lives in their communities and create conditions for developing enduring relationships with the adults whose stories they hear and then communicate to others. The *Life Stories* will also provide important information for use in joint planning and action to make communities more supportive of youth.

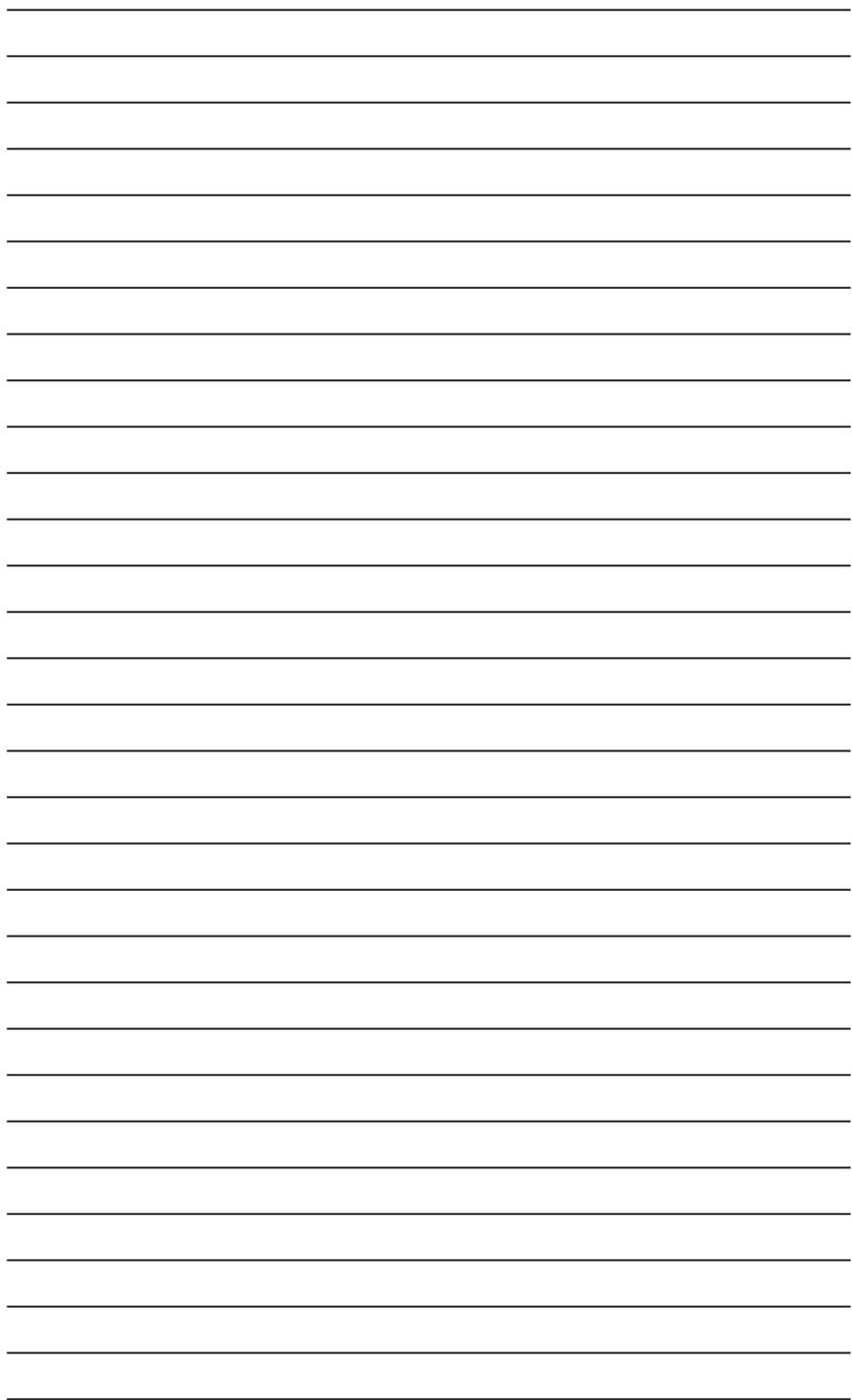
The project was initially developed for rural communities in NYS and elsewhere, to address "Brain drain" and loss of the young adult population, and the decision of youth who remain to drop out or not to pursue post-secondary education. If rural youth are to contribute to the vitality of their communities, they must graduate from high school and then pursue post-secondary education and training. Young adults must feel sufficiently engaged with those communities to remain in or return to them and to be active citizens.

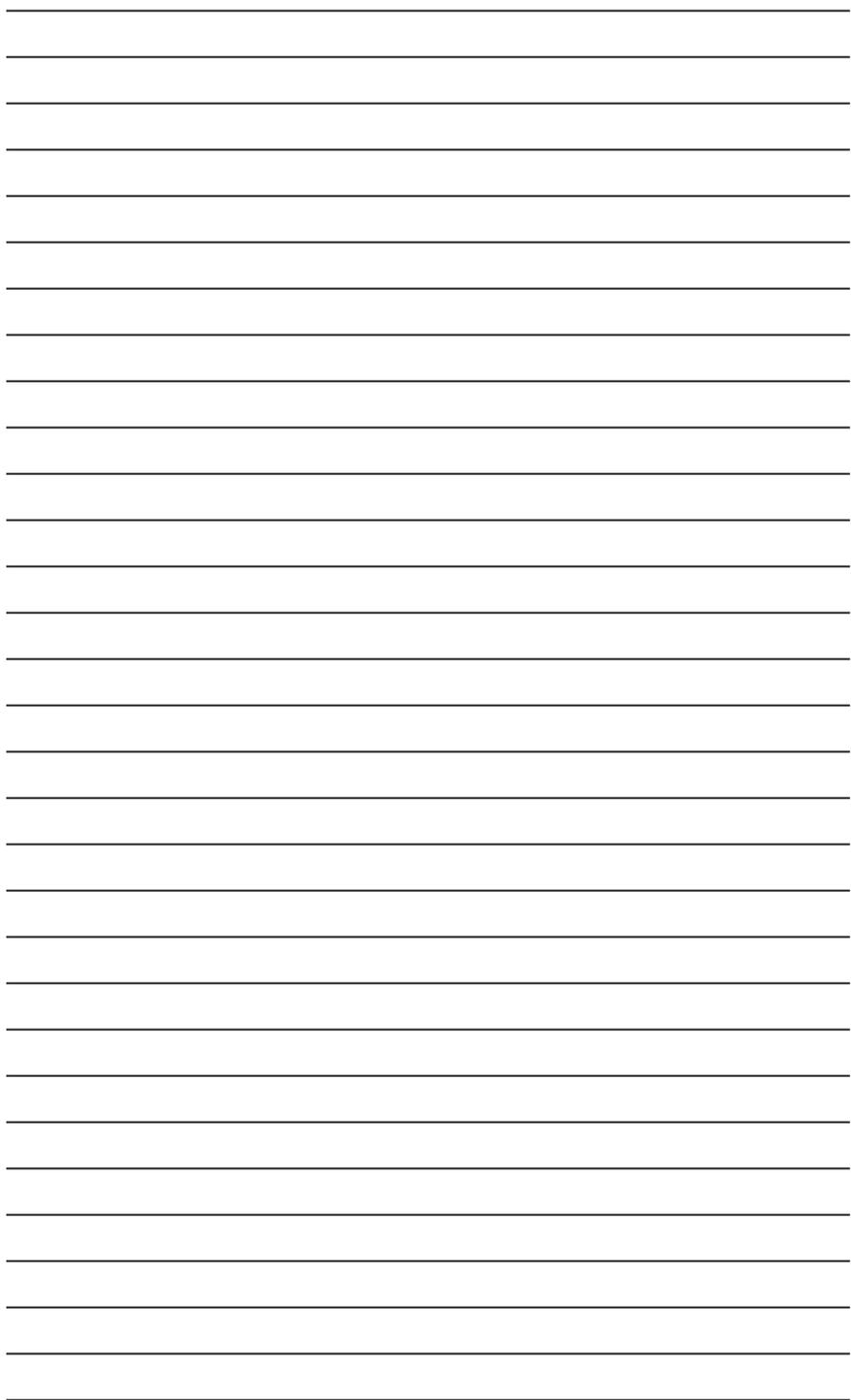
Logic Model: Community Mobilization for Mentoring Youth

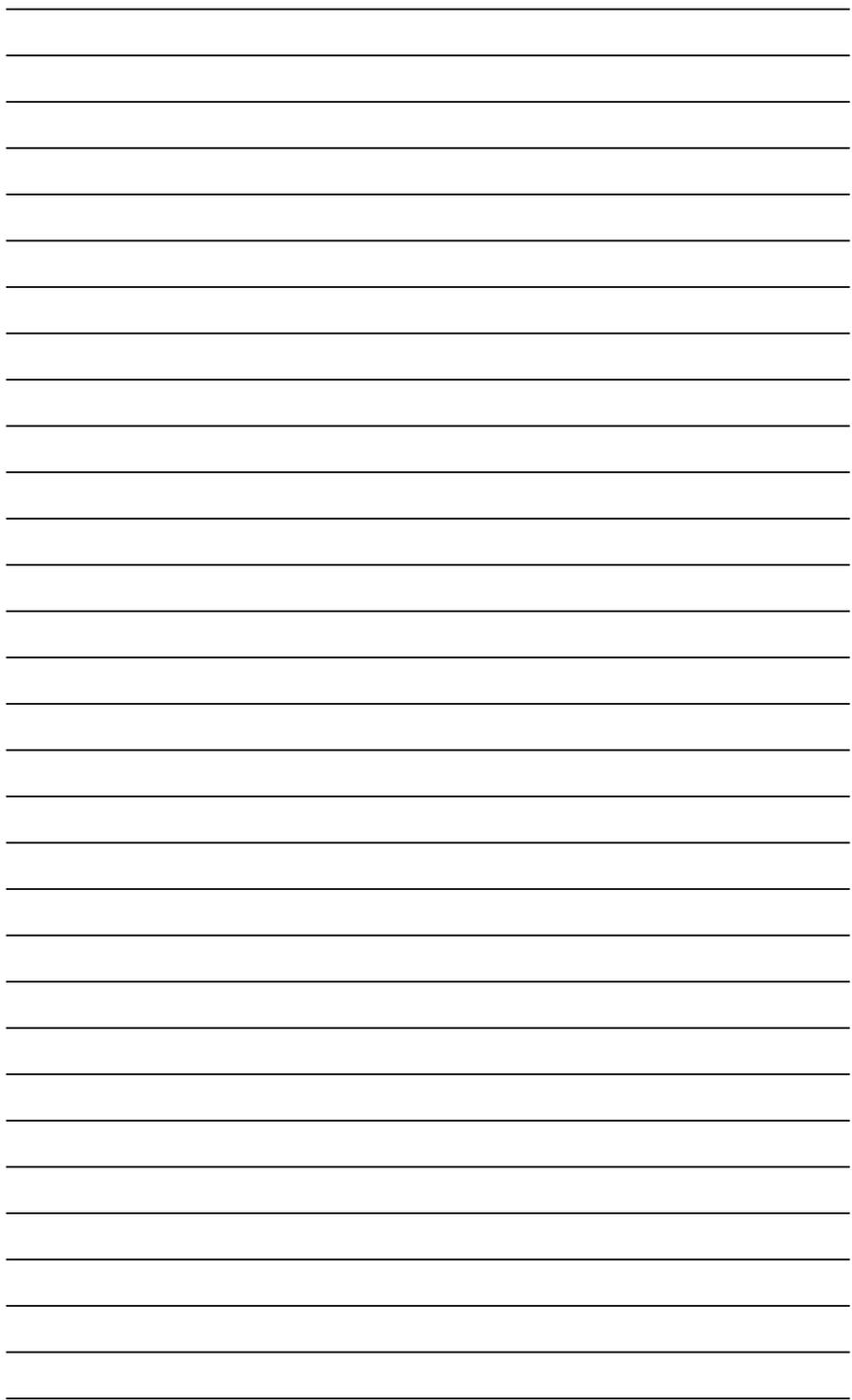


Assumptions

- 1 If given opportunities, youth and adults will engage in activities and form relationships.
- 2 Communities and institutions can be altered to create opportunities for youth-adult engagement.







Team Checklist Guide

____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____
initials

Adult Interviewee _____

Date(s) for Scheduled Interview(s) _____

Timeline	Date	Team member initials
Draft on newsprint	_____	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____
Review by another team (coach) _____	_____	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____
Review by adult (coach) _____	_____	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____
Create final copy	_____	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____

Interview prep

List *Timeline* leads/topics you want to know more about _____

• Figure out where lead/topics fit in interview _____

• Figure out questions to get “stories” on leads _____

• Consult with coach (____), as needed _____

Decide interviewer pairs* for main questions _____

Interview

Part I: Key experiences

Practice _____

Consult with coach (____), as needed _____

Interview

Part II: Important adults

Practice _____

Consult with coach (____), as needed _____

*pairs = primary interviewer, assistant interviewer

Interview	Date	Team member initials
Part III: Living in community		
Practice	_____	____/____/____/____/____
Consult with coach (____), as needed	_____	____/____/____/____/____
Decide note taker(s)	_____	____/____/____/____/____
Decide photographer(s)	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Practice	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Prep: get camera, check batteries, download	_____	____/____/____/____/____
Decide audio-recorder(s)	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Practice	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Prep: get recorder, check batteries, download	_____	____/____/____/____/____
Decide video-recorder(s), if needed	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Practice	_____	____/____/____/____/____
• Prep: get recorder, check batteries, download	_____	____/____/____/____/____

Notes

Timeline Questions Guide

1. Birth date, birth place, and childhood

When were you born?

Where were you born?

Where did you grow up as a child? How old were you when you lived there?

2. School

When did you graduate from high school/ or end high school?

Where was your high school located?

Did you go to school after that? *If yes,*

When?

Where? (name of college, location)

Did you get a degree or diploma? What kind?

If more schools, repeat questions for dates, location, kind of school, degree.

3. Work history

Are you currently working? *If yes*

What is your job? (lawyer, teacher, reporter, etc.)

When did you start this job?

Where do you work (location – town or city)?

Have you worked, or had other jobs? *If yes, for each job ask*

What kind of job did you have? (lawyer, teacher, reporter, etc.)

Who was your employer?

When did you start this job? And end?

Where did you work (location – town or city)?

Did you serve in the military? *If not previously mentioned*

When?

Where were you stationed?

What did you do?

4. Family

Any brothers or sisters?

Do you have any children? When were they born? Where?

5. Community, hobbies, volunteer work

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Do you want to add to your timeline any involvement now or in the past with organizations, community activities, volunteer work, churches, or faith-based organizations, etc.

When? Where (location and type of activity)?

6. Historical events

Are there any important local events you want to add to your timeline?

Are there any important national events you want to add to your timeline?

7. Additional key experiences or events

Are there any other key experiences you had that you want to add to your timeline?

Interview Questions Guide

Part I. Key experiences from timeline

1. On your Timeline you named some important events and experiences in your life? Read List below.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
2. Could you tell us more about (a)_____? What happened?
 - a. This was during (time period)?
 - b. How did that impact your life? Make a difference in your life?
3. Continue to probe about events (b), etc. listed above.
4. Are there other events that you remember now, that you think were important? Probes.

Part II. Important adults during adolescence

1. When you were in high school, did one or more adults outside your family (21 years or older) influence you in important ways?
Did an adult outside your family matter to you, or make a difference in your life?

IF YES, Could you *name these adults and how you knew him/her?* First name is sufficient (or pseudonyms). I just need to be able to refer to these persons as we speak. [List names of adults, and their roles.]

Adult #1 _____ Role _____

Adult #2 _____ Role _____

Adult #3 _____ Role _____

Adult #4 _____ Role _____

2. Interviewer asks a series of questions about Adult #1, then Adult #2, etc.
 - a. Initial Connection: How did you meet _____?
 - b. Length of relationship: When did you meet _____? (year in high school, or earlier)
 - c. What kinds of things did you do together? Where?
 - d. In what way did _____ influence you, (matter, make a difference in your life)?

Probes Oh?

Um hmmm.

Can you tell me more about . . . (that)?

Can you tell me about a time when you did that. . .

when . . . (that happened),

how. . . (that happened)?

How did . . . (that) come about?

When was that (at what point in time after you first met)?

Why was that important to you at that time?

In what way was that important to you?

How did that matter?

What kinds of things did you talk about? (e.g., values? goals?)

3. *Interviewer continues with same series of questions above about Adult #2, then Adult #3, etc.*

Part III. Reasons for living in this community (depends on what you learned from timeline)

1. What brought you to _____ [this community]?
2. Why did you remain in _____ [this community]?
3. Why did you return to _____ [this community]?

After the interview, the team debriefs about the interview and transcribes the tape. If they have further questions about the life story, they may want to request a follow-up interview with the adult.

Transcription Guide

Purpose

To transcribe your *Life Story* interview so team has a record to refer to when creating products.

Save your file

- Simply rename the template using the name of your interviewee and date of your interview, e.g, Marcia Johnson May 15 2008.doc
- Using the attached sample transcript as a template, change the information for your interview!
- Remember to save your file frequently!

Header

- Identify the interviewee
- Include the date of the interview, location of interview
- Insert page number

List roles of team members

- Interviewer(s)
- Videographer(s)
- Recorder(s)
- Photographer(s)
- Transcriber(s)
- Editor(s): who proofed the transcript?

Content – Body of interview

- Use initials on left, so that it is clear who is talking.(See *Sample Transcript*)
- Hit “tab” after the initials and then begin typing dialogue.
- This does not need to be double spaced, but there should be an extra line when the speaker changes.
- Note everything in your transcription. This includes filler words like “uh” and “um,” when something is inaudible, and if the recording stops for any reason.

General notes

- The key is to be as accurate as possible. Don’t change person’s words.
- Make use of the rewind button on the transcriber. Keep going back until you are sure you have things right.

- Once you are satisfied with your transcription, have some one else listen to the tape while reading it. (These people should be listed as Editors). They should save the document as a separate file, so that you can compare later. For example, Marcia Johnson May 15 2008-edit 1.doc
- Once your team is sure of the accuracy of the transcript, save the file as final, for example, Marcia Johnson May 15 2008 FINAL.doc

Sample transcript

Marcia Johnson, Interviewee

Date of Interview: May 15, 2008

Location: Home of MJ

Interviewers: Jane Smith, Paul Adams, Peter Jefferson, Susan Abbott, Margaret Allen

Videographer: MA

Recorder: PJ

Photographer: PA & SA

Transcribers: JS, PA, PJ

Editors: SA, JS, MA

JS: Testing. One, two, three, four. Okay. So when you were in high school did one or more adults, twenty-one years or older, not related to you, make a difference in your life or matter in an important way? If you could just name or was there any one?

MJ: I would say there would be three to four individuals.

JS: Okay. Want to just give me the first names?

MJ: [A], [B], and um, well, it was a family, so I would just say the [D].

JS: Okay. So I'll ask you then about each of them. So [A], how did you get to know [A] or when did you get to know her?

MJ: Umm, well Miss [A], she was my sophomore year English teacher.

JS: Okay.

MJ: And I took her again in third, oh actually one more individual, Miss [F]. Sorry. Just to add that, one last person. Back to Miss [A], she was my teacher from sophomore year 'til junior year. She was also my, not a mentor, well, she was a mentor to me but not a per se per se mentor in which I always, if I ever had a problem I could go and talk to her and she also wrote my college recommendations for me. Yeah, so.

JS: Oh. Okay. So you got to know her through class?

MJ: Through class and especially because of the nature of the class, sophomore year, that I took which was English and in my school I was, out of the graduating class [*. . . transcript continues in this way*].

Focus Group Guide

Purpose

To involve youth in leading feedback session on the *Life Stories* project.
Activity may be structured for 2 hours, indicated by timing.

Opening

10 minutes

Gathering, food

Tell us your first name.

Introduce moderator, assistant, and observers

Summarize purposes of focus group

- You have been invited to participate in this focus group because you participated in the *Life Story* project.
- We'll talk about what you got out of the project, what was your biggest disappointment, and where we go from here.
- Your feedback today will help improve the *Life Stories* project and will help plan your next phase in the project as well.

Establish ground rules

- Respect others.
- Listen to others.
- Agree to respect privacy and not to report what individuals said.

Transition question – Interview teams

5 minutes

Identify Interview Teams and your role in the Team

- Which Interview Team were you on?
- What did you do as part of that Team?

Form Pairs

Pair off with someone not on your Interview Team.

Key question 1 – Adult's life story

20 minutes

Part 1

[10 minutes]

Label Newsprint #1 – Adult's Life Story

- What did you learn that you thought was valuable? Why?
- What stands out to you about his/her life story?
- Share a story your adult told, and why that seems important to you
- Describe an adult who mattered to them in their adolescence?

Pairs interview each other about what they think was important about their adult's life story.

Part 2

[10 minutes]

Report partner's points to the large group. (Others may ask follow up questions.)

Youth volunteer records reports on newsprint

Key questions 2 & 3 – Satisfactions/ disappointments

45 minutes

Post-It Q & A

[15 minutes]

Label Newsprint:

#2 What did you get out of the project?

Satisfactions

#3 Was there anything that disappointed you?

Disappointments

Distribute 4" X 6" Post-It pads and pencil

You will have 15 minutes or more if needed, to write their responses to the questions, and to post their responses.

Read questions on newsprint

- Label each Post-It Satisfaction or Disappointment, write your response, and post it on appropriate newsprint.
- Use one Post-It for each response. You can have several responses for a question.
- After everyone finishes, maybe 15 minutes, we will talk about your responses

Post-It discussion

[20 minutes]

Discuss Post-It responses: Ask for meaning, clarification

Ask youth to group responses, categorize

Vote

[5 minutes]

Vote on responses that you think are most important, using circle

Summarize, discuss results

Key Question 4 – Activities

10 minutes

Label Newsprint:

#4 Activities – Helped me prepare

#4 Activities – Did not help much

Now we will focus on classroom activities that you think helped you prepare for the interviews, and activities that did not help you very much.

Write on your Post-Its, one comment per sheet

- When you think about the activities you did in class, which ones do you think helped you prepare for the interview? Activities — helped me prepare
- Were there activities that did not help very much? Activities— did not help much

Post your comments on newsprint

Discuss comments

Vote on comments you think are most important, using circles.

Key Question 5 – Next steps for new students

Label Newsprint #5 – Next steps for new students

10 minutes

Brainstorm list: write responses on newsprint

[5 minutes]

- If we do this again with other students, how could we make it better? (create?)
- What should we do that we did not do?

Clarify items on the list

[5 minutes]

Key Question 6 – Your next steps

15 minutes

Label Newsprint #6 – Your next steps

Do you want to continue with the project in some way? If so, how?

Our intent is that after transcribing the interviews, the students will create products using the *Life Story*. Products could be a video or photos for the school website, YouTube, an article for a newspaper or newsletter, a radio clip to share with other students, parents, the school staff, the community, etc. We hope that the products from the *Life Stories* will lead to a town hall type meeting with community to talk about opportunities for youth to be with adults, and your ideas about creating more.

- Do you have any next steps in mind that you would like to take?

- Can you think of any additional activities that you would like to participate in growing out of the life stories?

Write on Post-It

- Write next steps you would like to take, if any. Post your responses on Newsprint.
- Write one response per Post-It.

Couple youth volunteer to group responses

Discuss: Clarify points as needed

Summary report

2-3 minutes

- Summarize main points from focus group
- ** Is there anything we missed, have left out, or not talked about?

Feedback

5 minutes

Label newsprint: Feedback

1. Anything that worked well for you?
2. Anything we should change?
3. Anything we should add, do that we did not do?

Distribute index cards

We'd like your advice about running these focus groups.

Read questions on newsprint

Could you write your responses to each question on these index cards, and number the questions?

Service Learning Guide

Purpose

To encourage youth to identify *Service Learning* projects that would interest them as the next steps of **Community Mobilization for Mentoring Youth**.

What is Service Learning?

- Youth design and carry out a *civic responsibility project*.
- Youth collaborate with adults, opening opportunities for *natural mentoring*.
- *Youth reflection* on their progress occurs throughout the project life.

So you want to do a Service Learning project?

(Key questions and guiding principles)

- **What is your project idea?**
 - What are you trying to *change*?
 - What will you and your team members *do*?
 - How will the project be *useful* to the community?
- **Who are your community partners?**
 - *With whom and how* will you partner to plan and implement the activity?
 - What *steps* do you and your partners need to take?
- **How will you and your youth team benefit?**
 - What will you *learn*?
 - What are the opportunities for developing your *leadership skills*?
 - What are the *opportunities to reflect* on what you do?
- **What supports are needed to implement your project?**
 - Who will *advise you*?
 - Who will *help you plan and implement* your project?
 - If you *need money*, how will you get it?
 - What *additional supports* will you need?

Have you heard about?

Do Something: Railroad Crossing Safety In a “town hall” meeting the city council listened to the sixth grader’s initial safety proposal. Read about how they arrived at a workable solution at www.bettertogether.org/stories

Cherokee Volunteer Society Oklahoma high school students wanted to do something about the high levels of lead and heavy metals in their local waters. Read about how they partnered with local Cherokee tribal leaders, teachers, and the Environmental Protection Agency at www.nslp.convio.net/site/DocServer/learningindeed.pdf?docID=1201

Energy Use Middle school students teamed up with school administrators to create a weeklong program on energy conservation. Read about how they planned to save the community \$260 a day at www.earthforce.org/content/article/detail/2082

History In Your Own Backyard History students interviewed senior center residents about the Great Depression, World War II, and the Holocaust. They donated their essays to their local library. www.nylc.org/rc_projectexample_detail.cfm?emoid=20:422

We'll Bring It To You Sixth graders convinced their county board to waive recycling fees for electronic equipment. Read about their strategy at www.earthforce.org/content/article/detail/2069

Testing The Waters A high school biology class developed a five-year plan to clean up a polluted local lake. Read about how they partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, the town council, and their state Department of Natural Resources at www.nylc.org/rc_projectexample_detail.cfm?emoid=20:425

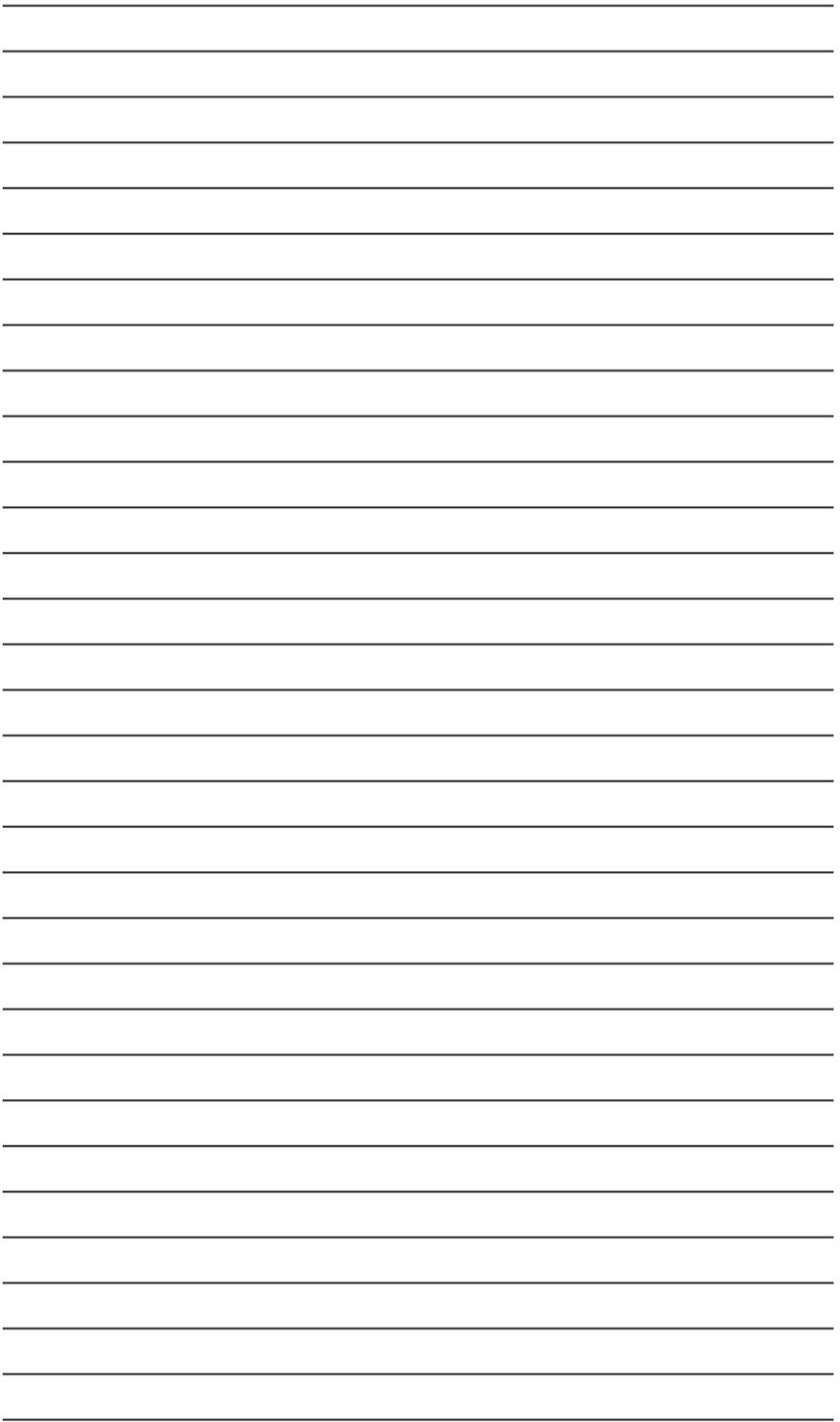
Amnesty International Chapter Youth work with adults on events and letter writing campaigns about social justice issues at www.amnesty.org/en/how-you-can-help

Students Against Violence Chapter (SAVE) Youth organize violence prevention workshops, dances, and school and community beautification projects at www.nationalsave.org/main/action.php

Schoolyard Habitat Youth work with educators and volunteers to learn about the history of the land, and to plan and maintain a goal through gardening at www.nwf.org/schoolyard/getstarted.cfm

Check out more “showcase” projects at

- www.hylc.org/pages-projectexamples
- www.convio.net
- www.learnandserve.gov





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