

Question Tips

Ask open-ended questions. Start questions with what, how, and why. They invite longer and more thorough answers and allow narrators to describe *causes* (what), *processes* (how) and *motivation/reflection* (why).

Ask for examples. People sometimes will make statements rather than tell stories. If someone says, “That was a period of my life when I was really happy,” try: “Can you describe a day in your life from that time?” or “Can you give me an example?”

Ask follow up questions. Whether a narrator is brief in their initial response or not, follow-up questions allow the narrator to potentially get closer to the core of a story, experience, or period in their life.

Don’t ask two questions at once. Most likely the narrator will only answer the easier of the two, or forget one of the questions.

Be Curious. Think about what you might do in the situation that the person is describing. Then lean into your curiosity and empathy when shaping your next question, without making any assumptions about their reaction. If you could imagine feeling angry in that situation, try asking, “How did that make you feel?”

Clarify and recount your understandings of the stories with the narrator as needed. Ask for spellings of proper nouns and make sure you are following the story as intended. If you have confusions, future listeners may have them too!

Some versatile question stems:

- Tell me more about...
- What was that like for you?
- How did you feel about...?
- Tell me about a time when...
- Why did that matter to you?
- What were or are the consequences of...?
- Have has... changed over time?
- How have your feelings towards... changed over time?
- What do you want others to know about... ?

Give it a try! Use the space below to practice writing open-ended questions.

Closed Questions	Open Questions
<i>What is your religion?</i>	• <i>Tell me more about how you experience or interact with spirituality</i>
<i>Did you like school growing up?</i>	
<i>Where was your favorite place to hang out?</i>	

Appendix D4: Sample Interview Guide

Structured using the Spradley Method. See the page at the QR code to the right to learn more about the Spradley Method.



Stage 1: Apprehension

- When and how did you come to live in public housing?
- Tell me about your immediate and closest community in public housing (for example, who else lived in your household)?
 - *Possible follow up:* How did your relationships—or lack of relationships—impact your experiences during this time in your life?
- Describe who you were as a person when you lived in public housing.
 - *Possible follow up:* How has that changed over time?

Stage 2: Exploration

- What do you remember about the social and political time period during which you were living in public housing? For example, are there any big historical events that stick out in your memory?
 - *Possible follow up:* Tell me about what you remember of those events and its impact on you and your surrounding community.
 - *Possible follow up:* How were your experiences of those events shaped by the setting of living in PH?
- Tell me about some of the ways you observed your community and neighborhood change during the time that you lived there.
 - *If applicable:* How have they changed since you moved away?
 - *Possible follow up:* Do you have any thoughts about why it changed?
- What has public housing meant for you in the total trajectory of your life?
- How do you feel about public housing as a whole?

Stage 3: Co-operation

- How many times have you moved? Describe for me what those experiences were like (physically and emotionally)?
- What does 'home' mean to you?
- What does 'family' mean to you?

Stage 4: Participation

- What do you hope for the future of public housing as an institution, housing policy, and the public housing community?
- What would you want your grandchildren and other descendants to know about your experiences in public housing?
- Is there anything else that I or the historical record needs to know about you, that I didn't ask about? Tell me more about that.